

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	26th September 2013
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Motion by Councillor Greig to set up a policing museum for the North East
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS/13/065

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the Finance and Resources Committee on Thursday, 13th June, 2013 a Motion was tabled by Councillor Greig, "that this Council works with Grampian Police, its two successor divisions, Aberdeenshire Council and the Moray Council to set up a policing museum for the North East and that all possible funding sources and sponsorship opportunities are sought."

The Committee determined to request officers to hold discussions with the organisations named in the motion, as well as the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and any other relevant organisations, regarding the terms of the motion, and the possibility of the creation of a regional museum which would include a public protection section.

This report provides an initial response to the Motion.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 1) Notes the information herein and;
- 2) Instructs officers to report in more detail to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport committee, and if agreed to pursue this project, to refer it to the budget process.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are none at present, although final recommendations may have either direct or indirect implications. While officers do not have details of the building condition, layout and potential planning constraints we would provisionally estimate that a museum facility, occupying the full building and having suitable storage would likely cost in excess of £10M based on other facilities built

elsewhere. The annual cost to run the Maritime Museum is £105,270. It is likely that the proposed facility would exceed this figure as there would also be costs associated with repayment of the Capital expenditure by way of debt. Currently there is no provision in the Council's approved 5 year business plan for this expenditure.

Should there be implications in the future, which include budget growth, any request will require to be incorporated into the Council's Priority-Based Budget process. The project is not included within the capital plan which is fully allocated at this time. Should resources be required to take the project forward any request for capital expenditure will require to be considered within the Council's capital prioritisation process.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The approved Education, Culture & Sport Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) sets out the current and projected future property needs for delivery of services meeting the requirements of the current approved Council 5 year business plan and likely future demands. The SAMP's only reference to the need for such a cultural facility is an action to 'undertake a review of Cultural assets across the city to assist in the implementation of the Cultural Strategy and prioritise investment in Cultural Assets'. This is detailed in section 5.16.

While Officers do not have details of the building condition, layout and potential planning constraints we would provisionally estimate that a museum facility, occupying the full building and having suitable storage would likely cost in excess of £10M based on other facilities built elsewhere. The annual cost to run the Maritime Museum is £105,270. It is likely that the proposed facility would exceed this figure. Currently there is no provision in the Council's approved 5 year business plan for this expenditure.

In planning and land use terms the Council has previously approved a planning brief for the Woolmanhill/Denburn sites. NHS Grampian and the Council are working towards a redevelopment of these sites and there would be significant financial consequences of the lost capital receipt to either or both parties which would have to be compensated in one way or another.

The Council has approved procedures for consideration of major infrastructure projects which includes the need for an option appraisal to be undertaken as part of the business case. Currently there are a number of other potential prominent historic buildings for such a facility e.g. Marischal College/Mitchell Hall which would have to be considered as alternative viable options if such a project was to be progressed.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1 The Motion requested officers to hold discussions with Grampian Police, its two successor divisions, Aberdeenshire Council and the Moray

Council, as well as the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and any other relevant organisations, to consider the possibility of creating a regional museum with a public protection section. All the listed organisations, with the exception of Grampian Police, which no longer exists, including the two Divisions of its successor body, Police Scotland, Aberdeenshire and Moray, and Aberdeen City have been contacted in order to ascertain the interest and feasibility of the proposal. To date, no discussions have taken place with NHS Grampian, however it would be appropriate to seek information as to any proposals they may have for access and display of their archives and historical collections, as well as their ownership of properties being considered by other bodies (please see 5.8 and elsewhere, below).

- 5.2 At the time of drafting, only general communications have taken place with Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Aberdeenshire and the Moray Councils. This has been mainly due to the summer period. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have work in hand in respect of their assets and officers have been advised that the request to discuss the Motion may assist. Police Scotland has confirmed that it still maintains the former Grampian Police museum.
- 5.3 Councillor Greig, in discussing the terms of his motion, asked that the proposal by former Councillor Cormack in respect of a museum relating to granite be referenced. The Committee is reminded that Council considered a motion from Councillor Cormack at its meeting on 18th November 2009, "That in the light of the restoration and re-use of Marischal College, the second largest granite building in the world, and in recognition of the central role that the granite industry has played in the city's economic development and in its cultural identity, that this Council agrees to the production of a report with options on how the Council and its partners can properly acknowledge the key contribution that the use of granite has made to the environment of Aberdeen and the wider North East region."
- 5.4 At the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 18th November 2010, a full report was considered, which outlined various options to acknowledge the contribution of granite. The report noted that officers had explored the possibility of establishing a Museum of Granite to acknowledge the contribution of granite to Aberdeen's economic development; however, due to the costs of developing a new single purpose museum, the Council was not in a position to take the matter forward at present. It was however suggested that the option could be explored further through the Granite Panel in due course. Other work, including an annual "Granite Festival" has progressed.
- 5.5 The Committee is asked to also note that a Motion by Councillor Kiddie in 2004 relates; the motion was, "(t)hat Aberdeen City Council notes the success of the Royal Scottish Museum as the focus of Scotland's national heritage; that the Council agrees that the need for a museum centred in Aberdeen to represent the heritage of Aberdeen and the North

East of Scotland should be explored by the appropriate committee.” At that time, officers highlighted the then current provision: Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen Maritime Museum, Provost Skene’s House and the Tolbooth and in addition, the University of Aberdeen, Gordon Highlanders Museum and the St. Peter’s Heritage Trust at Peterculter. The good relationship with Aberdeenshire Heritage and independent museums such as Blairs Museum was also noted.

- 5.6 The report also referenced the Museums and Galleries Collecting and Disposals Policy, which the same Committee considered, as well as outlined a joint initiative between the Council, Aberdeenshire Council and the University of Aberdeen to establish a North East Museums Partnership. This latter partnership was funded by the then Scottish Museums Council. The Committee decided that the motion be referred to the Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy Task Group and that it consider ways in which to improve cross-referencing arts, culture and heritage venues in the city.
- 5.7 In reporting to Committee in connection with the Art Gallery redevelopment proposals and the enabling development of a Museums Collections Centre, reference has been made to the above motion. Officers have reflected that the latter facility will become a new venue in the city, an “open store”, where visitors can access the Collections not displayed within either special or permanent exhibitions. The creation of new spaces in the Art Gallery will also enable more of the Collections to be shown.
- 5.8 Approaches to officers by the Open Space Trust and their aspirations for the East Kirk of St. Nicholas (“Mither Kirk”) and Aberdeen Medico-chirurgical Society’s (“Med-chi”) vision for the Simpson Pavilion at Woolmanhill are relevant to the Motion. A separate report on the “Mither Kirk” proposals is intended to be brought to a future meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, as it also relates to the Council decision on 22nd August 2012 to make a contribution to the project (Item 13, City Garden project) and which will require to be seen within the context of the Council’s future budget decisions.
- 5.9 The “Med-chi” Society wishes to exhibit its archives and artefacts in a more public place; they are currently held at Foresterhill. They have linked this wish to the likely forthcoming sale of the Woolmanhill Hospital site by NHS Grampian, which own the complex. In particular, they believe that there is merit in the recreation of the operating theatre in the Simpson Pavilion. The theatre was used by Professor Sir Alexander Ogston, who discovered the staphylococcus bacterium, which can be the cause of infections getting into a break or cut in the skin. These can range from “a minor boil to life-threatening infections such as septicemia (infection of the blood) or endocarditis (infection of the lining of the heart)”¹.

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Staphylococcal-infections/Pages/Introduction.aspx> accessed 26.8.13

- 5.10 The Society have suggested that the Simpson Pavilion could “become an Aberdeen city museum with the operating theatre restored to its original state and the other areas of the building, including the original entrance, largely restored to create spaces for exhibitions, meetings and other uses, including education.”² The vision includes proposals that the collections from the police and fire services, two universities and those of the City could all be displayed in the Pavilion. In addition, the story of granite and oil; Archibald Simpson, the architect of the Pavilion and many other key buildings in the city, could be celebrated, along with farming and other regional industries were the breadth of the displays to be widened.
- 5.11 The vision is complemented by an exploratory meeting in May, to which the Society invited representatives of Aberdeen Civic Society, Aberdeen City Heritage Trust and the Council’s Museums & Galleries and Planning and Sustainable Development Services to attend. The then draft vision was accepted, however achieving the purchase and renovation/redevelopment and the ongoing operational costs were the subject of discussion.
- 5.12 The proposal would be that always subject to a scheme being acceptable to the current owners, NHS Grampian; Historic Scotland and the Council as planning authority, capital funding would be raised; to progress this since the meeting in May, the Society now proposes that a steering group of interested parties be formed, which would draw up a business plan, commission a feasibility study to test the vision, survey the building internally and externally, as well as assess its value. The steering group would raise funding to carry out the feasibility study and survey, finance a project manager and fundraising capacity, as well as operating costs initially. The challenge of identifying additional Revenue budget was made clear at the meeting. The scale of what was being proposed was recognised by those attending the meeting in May. The Society has also written to the Council, seeking “cross party” support and offering to arrange a meeting of interested parties at an appropriate time.
- 5.13 Councillor Corall has highlighted that the city has been in the forefront of medicine, industries including textiles, paper, combs, heavy engineering, as well as granite and how for example, the creativity of local designers and manufacturers brought both benefit locally and spread Aberdeen’s reputation across the World. He believes that Woolmanhill would be a very appropriate location to tell that story, bringing collections from the City Council and University of Aberdeen together.
- 5.14 The University of Aberdeen has indicated that the concept of a Museum of Aberdeen is a priority with which it accords; using the collections held locally, including its own and those of the City, to project our heritage. Its current plans are to continue exhibiting its own Collections on campus at

² Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society, Simpson Pavilion, Woolmanhill, see below.

Old Aberdeen, however wishes to be included in the proposed wider discussion.

- 5.15 In addition to these projects, future uses of the “Grey Mill” at Broadford Works, Scotland's oldest iron-framed mill, are due to be considered. There is potential for this to house a cultural and/or a heritage/museum facility, dependent on whatever offers and agreements might be proposed for consideration.
- 5.16 The Council has had a Cultural Assets mapping undertaken to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the city's current creativity activity, a greater understanding of Aberdeen's cultural assets, strengths, unique qualities, as well as identifying local cultural and social needs, and developing a more robust evidence database for future strategic initiatives and investment.

Key objectives for the research included the requirement to:

- Provide evidence, findings and recommendations to support the Service Assets Plan and future Non Housing Capital Investment.
- Set priorities for refurbishment and new build cultural facilities within the Council's future Capital Programme.
- Provide baseline evidence to support agreed targets and outcomes.
- Provide population and participation profile and barriers.
- Provide Ethnic Group and Immigration Profiles.
- Profile existing Cultural Facilities and Institutions.
- Inform a future 'Community Benefit Package' clause procurement processes.
- Provide a Cultural Inheritance Profile: providing a profile of the City which further enables a longer term approach to a cultural legacy for Aberdeen.
- Provide a profile of Artists and Artistic Activities.
- A Quality of Life Profile to enable a strategic approach to promoting the city as a place to live and work.
- Provide commentary for other cultural facilities and enterprises in the city, including priorities for Council support for funding applications.
- Support the development and planning of the Creative Scotland Place Partnership agreement's Initiatives and programmes.

It was also anticipated that the research would present benefits to the wider cultural sector, supporting and informing their development planning, partnership work, audience development and income generation.

- 5.17 In the context of this report, the consultants found that the city centre is distinctive, but lacklustre and suggests that culture can play a major part in revitalising the city centre, suggesting that more imaginative

consideration is given to public space, make more of the city's unique heritage and tell the story of the city in a more engaging manner. Officers would interpret the consultants' recommendations to include developing what is already in place, using innovation, contemporary practice and making better use of the existing built environment to bring history alive in the city.

5.18 Within the "Assessment of offer quality" for Museums, Libraries and Archives, the consultants comment, it "has been suggested that the city lacks a Museum of Aberdeen – a venue in which all its history is explored in a comprehensive way. Many places have such city museums, but they are rarely central to a city's cultural or tourist offer." It also reflects that "the Maritime Museum explores several elements of the city's history, including the oil and gas industry; members of Oil and Gas UK have recently generously funded a complete refreshment of the oil and gas galleries. The report also points out that the "city needs to be more imaginative in the way it promotes" Aberdeen's archives, both the City's own and those held at the University of Aberdeen. A copy of the cultural assets mapping report by BOP can be found in the Members Library and a full report will be brought to the meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 21st November.

5.19 In order to fully report on the Motion, further dialogue with the bodies listed in 5.1, the Open Space Trust, the Med-chi Society, NHS Grampian, the University of Aberdeen, the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust and any other interested bodies will need to take place and all the aspirations overlaid. Dependent on the outcome of this dialogue, it is likely that a subsequent report to Committee would include recommendation for an options appraisal of properties to be undertaken.

6. IMPACT

Corporate - This report relates to 'Aberdeen – the Smarter City', in particular:

- We will improve access to and increase participation in arts and culture by providing opportunities for citizens and visitors to experience a broad range of high quality arts and cultural activities.
- We aspire to be recognised as a City of Culture, a place of excellence for culture and arts by promoting Aberdeen as a cultural centre hosting high quality and diverse cultural events for the whole community and beyond.
- We will embrace the distinctive pride the people of Aberdeen take in their city and work with them to enhance the sense of well-being here, building strong communities which look out for, and look after one another.
- We aim to leave a legacy which will make compelling reading in a new chapter in the history of Aberdeen and we aim to do this with one voice.

- We will provide a high quality education service within our schools and communities which will improve attainment and life chances of our children and young people to achieve their full potential in education, employment or training.
- Working with our third, public and private sector partners, we will provide opportunities for lifelong learning which will develop knowledge, skills and attributes of our citizens to enable them to meet the changing demands of the 21st century.
- We will aim to have a workforce across the city which has the skills and knowledge to sustain, grow and diversify the city economy.

It has direct links to the city's Learning Strategy and in supporting the experiences and outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence.

In terms of the Single Outcome Agreement, the programme contributes to Outcome 3, "We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation" and Outcome 13, 'We will take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity'. The new SOA guidance for Community Planning Partnerships includes inclusion of the following key national priorities as appropriately, including particular focus on how local inequalities of outcome will be reduced through a clear strategic focus on the:

- Early years and early intervention
- Outcomes for older people
- Employment
- Economic recovery and growth
- Health inequalities
- Safer and stronger communities

Public – There is likely to be considerable public interest in this report, due to the range of initiatives and aspirations included.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

As with the financial implications, there may be risks, which at this time relate to the decisions of timescales third parties and the willingness or ability of the Council to respond, dependent on its priorities.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Education and Leisure Committee, 30th August 2004, Notice of Motion, Councillor James Kiddie: Museum of Aberdeen and North East Scotland.

Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society, Simpson Pavilion, Woolmanhill, Vision Paper – an Aberdeen City Museum? June 2013 (included below).

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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**ABERDEEN MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY
SIMPSON PAVILION, WOOLMANHILL
VISION PAPER
AN ABERDEEN CITY MUSEUM?**

Introduction

The Simpson Pavilion (called after Archibald Simpson, its architect) was opened in 1840 to replace older infirmary buildings on the same site. It was the first of three pavilions forming Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Most functions moved to the Foresterhill site in 1936 and the Simpson Pavilion was thereafter used for various purposes by various tenants. At present only the ground floor is in use. It will shortly be vacated and the whole site put on the market.

The Simpson Pavilion is a striking grade A listed building occupying a prominent site overlooking the Denburn area of the city centre and close to the art gallery and His Majesty's Theatre. It has a copper dome with north facing windows under which was an operating theatre most famously used by Professor Sir Alexander Ogston, the discoverer of the staphylococcus bacterium and an early proponent of antiseptic surgery. The interior of the building, including the operating theatre, has been significantly altered over the years. There is an historic ventilation plant in the basement. It is believed that the whole Denburn area is scheduled for redevelopment.

Vision

The Medico-Chirurgical Society (Med Chi) would like to see the Simpson Pavilion become an **Aberdeen city museum** with the operating theatre restored to its original state and the other areas of the building, including the original entrance, largely restored to create spaces for exhibitions, meetings and other uses, including education. The Society feels that this would be a valuable civic amenity, adding to Aberdeen's cultural life as well as providing a significant visitor attraction. It is thought that various local organisations may have collections which they would wish to be on public display including

- the Med Chi Society
- the police and fire services
- possibly the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon's University
- Aberdeen City may have items in storage, including some from the old Regional Museum, as well as other items meriting display and the art gallery is believed to have many items which it is currently unable to exhibit.
- Other local industries such as the granite and oil industries may also have stories to tell and be willing to contribute. Archibald Simpson was the architect for many famous buildings in Aberdeen, so recognition of his work would also be appropriate. If Aberdeenshire were involved, then farming and other industries could be included.

It is possible that some parts of the building could be used for housing or other commercial purposes without impacting on the main area. Hopefully it could be managed either by the city council or a trust.

Present Position

Members of the Society's Heritage Group have held a very preliminary meeting with representatives of Aberdeen Civic Trust, Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, the City Planning Department and the City Libraries and Museums Department. Many issues were identified and the scale and complexity of the vision was recognised but the Society would like to pursue the project.

Next Moves

Some future actions have been identified and are listed below but it is acknowledged that this list is not complete and is not in order since most actions are interdependent.

- Produce a preliminary briefing paper (this paper)
- Inform and hopefully gain support from other organisations, including the City Council and University of Aberdeen
- Establish a project steering group, involving as many relevant bodies as possible and preferably with a well known chairperson
- Draw up a proper business plan
- Commission a feasibility study to establish the possible pros and cons of the vision
- Survey the building to ascertain its present state (especially the roof and copper dome); the feasibility of restoring the interior; the feasibility of clearing any asbestos and the building's likely valuation
- Gain funding for the feasibility study and survey before considering options including appointing a project manager and fundraising for the purchase and restoration of the building and hopefully including the running costs for the first few years.

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