

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

29 MAY 2012

EXTENSION OF RAMM'S ACQUISITIONS & DISPOSAL POLICY AND STATEMENT ON ACQUISITION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the current and planned strategy relating to collections development at RAMM and includes a timetable for producing a Collections Development Policy by the end of 2013 along with an extension of the existing Acquisitions & Disposals Policy until that date. It also describes the current position in relation to the acquisition of new archaeological archives.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The character and scope of any museum's collection is defined by its approach to acquisitions and the type and range of material it decides to collect. Museums have long been encouraged, as a matter of best practice, to have acquisitions and disposals policies which shape the development of their collections, so that collecting does not become disparate; is accountable, transparent and responsible; and prevents competition or overlap between museums. Disposals are only normally undertaken under exceptional circumstances and are governed by the Museums Association's Code of Ethics, acceptance of which is necessary to a museum's official recognition by government and funding bodies.
- 2.2 RAMM's Acquisitions & Disposal Policy was due for review at the end of 2010 but in preparing for its revision the Museum has commenced a wholesale review which will provide an in depth assessment of the collections' strengths, weaknesses, gaps and potential. This work is funded through MLA/ACE Renaissance programmes. The review exercise will provide a solid foundation for a new version of the Acquisitions & Disposal Policy which is to be called a Collections Development Policy. The change in title reflects the more strategic approach we expect to result from the Collections Review.
- 2.3 In carrying out this review RAMM must also define its approach to the acquisition of archaeological archives. The large size of these archives is an important consideration, given the responsibilities for long-term housing, storage, management and conservation they entail. The long-term costs of collecting this material and limits of our storage facilities need to be factored into our approach and will form part of the Collections Review.
- 2.4 An up to date Acquisitions & Disposals or Collections Development Policy is a requirement of Accreditation. Accreditation is the UK standard for museums and galleries. It defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. It is a baseline quality standard which helps guide museums to further improvement. In RAMM's case it will provide a platform for planning further development, research activity, partnership and collaboration. Whilst RAMM was closed for development RAMM had 'provisional Accreditation status' but is now required to submit for full Accreditation assessment in May 2012.

Accreditation is a requirement of Major Partner Museum funding which is a programme of three year revenue payment which will benefit RAMM in 2012-15.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 In order to submit the Accreditation application in early May 2012 RAMM prepared a statement which outlined our timetable for completing the Collections Review; shaping the Collections Development Policy; and bringing it to Scrutiny Committee at the end of 2013. This new document will cover the period 2014-19.
- 3.2 In the meantime, with the Portfolio Holder's agreement, the old Acquisitions & Disposal Policy will be extended until the end of 2013.
- 3.3 Our approach to acquiring archaeological archives in the future will be established as part of the Collections Development Policy.

4 TIMETABLE

End 2010	Cease the acquisition of development funded archaeological collections until the Collections Review is completed
Spring 2011	Commence Collections Review
September 2011	Preliminary Collections Review assessment completed
February 2012	Extend RAMM's current Acquisition & Disposal Policy until the end of 2013
June 2013	Completion of collection development plans for four principal areas: art, antiquities; ethnography; and natural history
December 2013	Produce new Collections Development Policy for Committee approval

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The purpose of the Collection Review and the Collections Development Policy is to re-examine the nature, extent and sustainability of our collecting activity. This exercise along with RAMM's approach to acquiring archaeological archives is being undertaken with a very specific awareness of the long-term responsibilities and resource implications involved in housing, management, care and conservation of this material now and in the future.

6 RECOMMENDED that

Committee Members note the statement along with the timetable outlined at section 4.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ECONOMY

S:PA/LP/ Committee/512SCC12
17.5.12

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None