

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - COMMUNITY 5 JUNE 2007

TEMPORARY STAFF AT THE ROYAL ALBERT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the current staffing arrangements of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), and to make them aware of a series of delegated decisions which have culminated in the present structure.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Council was successful in 2002 firstly in becoming part of a consortium of museums to represent the South West (the South West Hub) and secondly in that consortium becoming one of only three in England to receive funding in the first round of the Renaissance in the Regions programme. This programme is run by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and its funding is directly delegated by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, (DCMS) following the 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). In 2005 the next CSR funded a second round of regional hubs, in the other six regions of England, but at a lower level than the first round, which continued to receive financial support at the original level.
- 2.2 The objective of the Renaissance in the Regions programme was to establish centres of excellence in every region. It first did this by investing in all the areas of museum practice: education, collections, conservation, visitor services and audience development. It set up targets for broadening and deepening the visitor experience, notably by insisting that museums in the programme should ensure that they were serving every part of their community, not just traditional museum-goers. The very substantial funding increased the capacity of museums in receipt of it by a large margin, so that they were able to provide invigorated public facing services, such as exhibitions, displays and activities, and education, but also to deal with the largely invisible elements which can only be neglected for so long before they begin to affect the service adversely; these include conservation, cataloguing and recording backlogs, and research. Renaissance was unique in recent times in that it allowed museums to address those issues as well as those with more immediate impact.
- 2.3 For most Renaissance museums, RAMM included, this additional capacity was achieved by employing additional staff. Although DCMS and MLA encouraged all museums to treat this new funding stream as permanent, most local authorities, with the benefit of years of experience of government programmes, were more cautious, and again like Exeter City Council, used temporary contracts for the new posts.
- 2.4 Increasingly in round 2, which began in 2005, museums in the programme have been required to become beacons for surrounding museums too. This is something which RAMM had already taken on board, having appointed development officers for conservation and collections who work across Devon and beyond.

- 2.5 To give an idea of the scale of the programme, the City Council receives approximately £1,000,000 per annum from Renaissance – which more or less doubles the Council's budget for the museum. There are 38 temporary posts funded in full and 6 permanent posts, the cost of which is part funded by the scheme, out of a total staff of 71.

3. TEMPORARY STAFF

- 3.1 Appendix I setting out the disposition of staff in the museum, showing how each post is funded, and details of the contracts is circulated separately to Members. It is noticeable that with only a few exceptions, the Renaissance funded posts terminate on 31 March 2008. That is because the current funding agreement expires then, and we have felt it prudent to make staff very clear that the City Council is not in a position to continue their employment if the funding dries up.
- 3.2 It seems likely that the Renaissance programme will continue in some form in April 2008, but that form is dependent on the success of DCMS in the present Comprehensive Spending Review, which is not now due to be announced until the Autumn. Given that DCMS and then MLA will then have to prepare their own plans for whatever funding is available, we are expecting that once again enormous pressure will be put on staff and on the Council at the very last minute to respond and create a business plan to carry out the objectives passed down to us.

4. APPOINTMENT DECISIONS

- 4.1 The first Renaissance staff were appointed in 2002, and the number in post has built up since then. It is not the case that large numbers of staff have been appointed all at the same time, and the capacity of the management to take on new staff and their work has determined how and when the appointments are made. The staff chart is now very complicated indeed, because many staff with permanent contracts have been given temporary Renaissance appointments, often effectively promotions. In those cases their substantive post has then been filled with a temporary appointment. In other cases there are job shares, and the picture is quite a tangled one.
- 4.2 Most appointments have been made using delegated powers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Human Resources, and except for reports to Executive in April 2004 and February 2006 Members have not had the opportunity to look at the overall picture of staffing at the height of Renaissance. The gradings of these posts have been made using the Council's Job Evaluation procedure. It is perhaps sometimes difficult to see how the appointments fit strategically into the Council's operations, but it is probably better to look at them as part of a larger project, which itself fits very well into several of the Council's Strategic Objectives, notably a Cultural and Fun Place to Be, Prosperous City and Learning City.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Fixed Term (Prevention of less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2001 has resulted in there being very little difference in the employment status of permanent and temporary staff. Staff with time-limited contracts accrue rights in exactly the same way as their colleagues, except that they cannot claim any right to stay on in employment beyond the contract date. The City Council therefore has a potential liability at the end of each of the contracts, for redundancy and, in some cases, pension payments. The current estimated liability, should all contracts terminate on

31 March 2008, would be £145,812.71 at current salary levels which are due to increase backdated to 1 April 2007. Although all the other employment costs of the temporary staff have been fully covered by Renaissance, there is no formal provision for end of contract costs. However it is the policy of the Hub management team, composed of the museum managers of the five members, to retain enough in the Renaissance budgets to cover those costs as and when they arise. We hope of course that the settlement for 2008 will enable us to keep on all those staff whose work is not completed: in the nature of a project like this, some staff will reach the end of the task they were employed to undertake, so there is no blanket assumption that all staff will stay on anyway. The further extension of any temporary contract will by its nature also increase the liabilities when the contracts eventually come to an end.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There is no doubt that the Renaissance funding stream has transformed RAMM, perhaps more than many other museums. Some Hub members are very large and the sums have not been able to change much. Others are too small and have lacked the original capacity to capitalise as much as they might. RAMM however is the ideal size, and had also modernised its staff structure in advance, so that when the new staff came, they slotted easily into existing hierarchies. There was also huge potential in that there was only a vestigial education service, and we were able to make a very quick impact by bringing in new staff and big resources.
- 6.2 Renaissance has also contributed very greatly to our preparations for the RAMM Development Project, enabling us to prepare objects for future display, to set up Also RAMM, the out-of-building programme which will keep RAMM in the public eye while the construction and refurbishment work is going on.
- 6.3 RAMM is now recognised as one the best regional museums in the country. Its staff are in constant demand for assistance with other development and promotional projects, we receive regular visits, and we are used as the exemplar for what Renaissance can do.
- 6.4 Officers will be monitoring the future of the programme, and ensuring that any financial liabilities which might arise will be covered by the external funds.
- 6.5 The current staffing structure has been built up slowly and, it might appear, rather disjointedly. However there is a long term strategic view, both inside and outside the Council, which is being managed to the benefit of the citizens of Exeter, and the City's visitors.

7. RECOMMENDED

- 1) that the report, and the temporary appointment decisions, be noted.

HEAD OF LEISURE AND MUSEUMS

S:LP/Committee/607SCC13
16.5.07

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None