

Museums consultation preliminary findings

Summary

This report summarises findings from the consultation on the proposal to withdraw funding from two museums – Barnet Museum and Church Farmhouse Museum – which are directly supported by the council.

Consultation ran for 6 weeks, from 17 December 2010 to 17 January 2011. Consultation documents were available in both museums, online, and promoted through council press releases, website information, and information given directly to key stakeholders.

The consultation set out to:

- Take responses to the proposal to withdraw funding.
- Listen to views of service users and local organisations, consider alternative ideas and proposals for future service delivery which present significant savings or income.
- Consider options for future service provision, exhibitions, housing relevant archives and management and display of artefacts.
- Consider options for future use and management of properties.

Overall response

- Total number of online responses - 158
(Barnet Museum – 15)
(Church Farm House – 74)
(Both – 71)
- Total number of hard copy responses - 41
(Barnet Museum – 27)
(Church Farm House Museum – 11)
(Both Museums- 3)
- Total number of letters - 18
(Barnet Museum – 9)
(Church Farm – 9)
- Total number of emails - 44
(Barnet Museum – 26)
(Church Farm House -11)
(Both – 7)
- Petitions lodged with council (there are two petitions currently running for both Barnet Museum and Church Farm House Museum)

Church Farmhouse Museum

Responses:

- 5 people agreed with the proposal (although their comments through out the rest of the survey suggest that they meant to disagree)
- 100 people disagreed with the proposal

Why they disagree –

The most common responses reference:

- loss to the community heritage of the area were the building to pass out of Council control
- educational value of the building and the collections via school visits, outreach work by staff and archaeological activities
- historic value of the building
- suspicion that the Council wishes to sell the building and that withdrawal of funding is merely a means to achieve this
- the museum's value towards community cohesion by evidencing a shared history of the area
- negative impact upon the quality of life in Barnet by removal of access to the museum
- educational, cultural and leisure value of the exhibitions and permanent exhibits

What are the key issues raised –

- respondents raise questions regarding the Council's management of finances, including the cost of bureaucracy, Councillor's allowances and other remunerations, transport and rubbish collection
- ownership of the collection is in the hands of the Borough but, since many items were gifted, the Council is legally required to seek the original donors and offer return
- the Museum has ongoing relationships with other museums, associations and societies

Alternative ideas for service delivery –

- Create a Trust for community service delivery
- Cut staff, cut opening hours and make use of volunteers
- Develop better relationships with similar bodies and promote the service
- Charge for entry and/or create other revenue- attracting opportunities
- Develop grant applications and use of grant funding

Alternative ideas for use of the buildings –

- Co-locate other facilities into the Museum
- Develop a partnership with MODA

Alternative ideas for collections –

- None proposed

Letters in support of the activities of Church Farmhouse Museum have been received from the following bodies:

University College Institute of Archaeology
London and Middlesex Archaeological Society
Pinner Local History Society
Hendon and District Archaeological Society (HADAS)
Friends of Church Farmhouse Museum (FCFM)
St Mary's Church, Hendon
London Topographical Society
Mill Hill Historical Society

In addition, HADAS and FCFM have requested a formal business meeting with the Council at which they intend to propose a scheme for community operation of the Museum.

Barnet Museum

Responses:

0 people agreed with the proposal

77 people disagreed with the proposal

Why they disagree –

The most common responses reference:

- Volunteer-run model conforms to the central Government's Big Society theme
- Perceived low cost to the Council
- educational value of the collections via school visits, outreach work by staff and research activities
- historic value of the Barnet and District Local History Society to the area
- suspicion that the Council wishes to sell the building and that withdrawal of funding is merely a means to achieve this
- negative impact upon the quality of life in Barnet by removal of access to the museum
- educational, cultural and leisure value of the exhibitions and permanent exhibits

What are the key issues raised –

- respondents raise questions regarding the Council's management of finances, including lost funds from Icelandic investment, use of consultants and marketing, the cost of bureaucracy, Councillor's allowances and other remunerations, transport and rubbish collection
- ownership of the building is in the hands of the Borough but, since the building was gifted for the purpose of housing a museum, the Council may be legally required to continue to provide premises.

- High Barnet location of the museum and research collection is important, both for the relevance of the collection and the historic identity of the area.

Alternative ideas for service delivery –

- Create a Trust for community service delivery and/or grant BDLHS a long lease at peppercorn rent to enable this
- Develop better relationships with similar bodies and promote the service
- Charge for entry and/or create other revenue- attracting opportunities such as business sponsorship, community fund-raising, charges for research work
- Develop grant applications and use of grant funding

Alternative ideas for use of the buildings –

- Co-locate other facilities into the Museum
- Develop a partnership with MODA
- Create retail opportunities around catering sales and heritage related items

Alternative ideas for collections –

- None proposed

Letters in support of the activities of Barnet Museum have been received from the following bodies:

Barnet Residents Association
The Barnet Society
Underhill Junior School
Queen Elizabeth Girls' School

In addition, Barnet and District Local History Society (BDLHS) have submitted a formal business case proposing Asset Transfer of the Museum's Wood Street premises to BDLHS for the purpose of continuing to provide a Museum.

Alternative savings ideas

Short summary of proposals for savings from both sites

Alternative options for council to consider

- Other sites/display spaces
- Lease/transfer to voluntary groups or trusts
- Other public use of the buildings