

Committee:	Westbury Manor Joint Management Committee
Date:	08 October 2013
Title:	Monday Opening at Westbury Manor Museum
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this paper is present options for re-opening Westbury Manor Museum on Mondays. The paper presents two options for consideration by and recommendation of the Committee.

2. Background information

2.1 In July 2011, as part of the Phase 1 restructure to enable the Museum Service to adapt to the end of Renaissance funding and to be resilient to a challenging economic environment, Westbury Manor Museum reduced its opening hours by closing Mondays. At that time this was the most effective day to close in terms of a consistent approach across the service and taking account of the working times of the museum team.

2.2 Closing on Mondays in Fareham means that the museum cannot take advantage of the increased footfall in West Street brought by the market which may have had an impact on visitor numbers.

2.3 Following the successful implementation of a Phase 2 restructure to create the Arts and Museums Service in June 2012, which introduced Museum Volunteers to the team delivering the service, the Museum is now in a position to consider changing hours to enable Monday opening to be re-introduced.

3. Options

3.1 Option 1 - Re-open on Mondays and close on Wednesdays or Thursdays

Wednesday and Thursday are currently the lowest attended days. Closing on one of these days and re-opening on Monday would deliver some benefit in terms of visitor numbers due to the significance of Mondays for Fareham.

This solution would represent no change to total core staff hours and would be achieved by swapping either Wednesday or Thursday for Monday opening. This option also retains the potential for the site to be opened on selected Wednesdays or Thursdays for tailored education visits and specific one-off events subject to staffing availability for such events.

3.2 Option 2 – Earlier closing on all days to enable 6-day opening

This option would mean reducing the hours across all days to enable the Museum to open Monday-Saturday. This would be achieved by closing an hour earlier on weekdays and two hours earlier on Saturdays. So the current opening hours of

Tuesday-Friday **10am – 5pm**

Saturday **10am – 4pm**

Sunday **Closed**

would under this proposal become

Monday-Friday **10am - 4pm**

Saturday **10am – 2pm**

Sunday **Closed**

The last hour in the day is the least well attended so it would allow the museum to maximise the effectiveness of its opening hours. It would give consistent and easily remembered daily opening times. Events and activities are usually scheduled for morning or early afternoon so should remain largely unaffected. If introduced with good publicity, visitors would be easily able to plan around these opening times.

4 Other Factors

4.1 Staff & Volunteers

Initial informal conversations have taken place with staff and volunteers. These have indicated a positive reaction to change of opening hours. Staff and volunteers would need to be consulted in more detail about the proposal once a steer has been given about which option is recommended.

4.2 Potential Costs

In considering six day opening, there is a need to consider any potential increase in costs. Other issues that would require further consideration would be any impact of staff leave and sickness being spread over a greater number of days or by factors such as increased energy costs. Energy costs are estimated to cost £970 more per annum for a six day week (based on the 2012 daily energy costs of £19.47 per day).

4.3 Time frames

The timing of any decision to change opening times needs to be carefully considered to ensure maximum benefit in terms of publicity whilst ensuring adequate time for staff consultation, decision making processes etc.

4.4 Central Services

For both options, there may be some added complexity linked to the provision of central museum services. Maintenance and collections work is currently conducted on Mondays whenever possible and the rotas for sometimes part time staff who carry out this work reflects this. A change in opening days at Westbury Manor, may create some knock on effect for maintenance and collections staff that would need further thought.

These other factors would need to be resolved before any change to opening times takes place to ensure that all practical consideration and cost implications have been fully addressed.

Recommendation

That the Westbury Manor Museum Joint Management Committee:

1. Considers the options for Monday opening
2. Recommends that the museum trials Option 1 over a 12 month period thereby opening on Monday and closing on Wednesday or Thursday with the aim to generate increased participation.
3. Recommends that the museum further explores Option 2 including more detailed analysis of the operational and financial issues mentioned in this report, to be considered once the impact of Option 1 has been established.