



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET 9 JANUARY 2025
Subject	APPROVAL OF POLICIES FOR THE CORINIUM MUSEUM
Wards affected	All,
Accountable member	Councillor Paul Hodgkinson Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience Email: Paul.Hodgkinson@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Joseph Walker Head of Economic Development and Communities Email: Joseph.Walker@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Stuart Wilson Leisure Contracts Lead Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To review and approve the Collections and Human Remains Policies of the Corinium Museum, and to agree a delegation to the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience.
Annexes	Annex A – Collections Policy Annex B – Human Remains Policy
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the Collections and Human Remains Policies of the Corinium Museum;2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience to determine accession and deaccession requests and agree the Museum's Forward Plan.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	NO



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Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Policies have been prepared by the Museum Director and Museum support team, taking account of the requirements for Museum best practice.



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** In order to retain accreditation, the Corinium Museum Service (CMS) is required to operate in line with a number of policies. These policies need to conform with sector best practice, and are subject to periodic review. They must be signed off by Cotswold District Council as the Governing Body for the Museum. This report introduces two revised policies, the Collections Policy and the Human Remains Policy.
- 1.2** The Collections Policy contains the procedures the Museum will follow in acquiring artefacts, a process known as 'accession' and for disposing of artefacts; 'deaccession'. The Policy vests this decision with the Governing Body, Cotswold District Council. This report proposes a delegation to the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience, as an appropriate mechanism to balance timely decision-making and necessary oversight.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Corinium Museum is a highly acclaimed museum, showcasing local history and Romano-British life. It is vitally important that the Museum retains its status as an accredited Museum. This is important in terms of maintaining the Museum's reputation, and by extension, that of the Council as its Governing Body. Retaining accreditation is a requirement upon Freedom Leisure in the terms of the Culture contract. Furthermore, accreditation is also important in attracting grant funding, helping to maintain and refresh the Museum's offer.
- 2.2** In order to retain its accreditation, the Museum must operate within recognised sectoral best practice, which is in part evidenced by having the appropriate policies. These have been drafted and reviewed periodically by the Council. Following changes nationally to recognised best practice, the CMS have submitted two revised policies for the Council's consideration.

3. COLLECTIONS POLICY

- 3.1** Attached at Annex A is a revised Collections Policy. This is based on the existing, approved policy, amended to reflect sectoral best practice, as expressed in the 'Spectrum' standards. The Policy covers the rationale and process for acquiring new artefacts, and the circumstances where artefacts may be disposed of.



- 3.2** Over the passage of time, more artefacts will be unearthed or owners seek to transfer to the Museum, and the collection would grow; the accession, conservation and storage of artefacts, whether or not they are displayed, is a significant burden on the sector, including the Corinium Museum. The collections policy enables the CMS to be strategic in its acquisitions, focusing on its core collections.
- 3.3** The policy also covers the process of disposals. The ethical consensus on museum disposal has shifted from, in the words of the Museums Association, a 'strong presumption' against disposing of accessioned objects to acknowledging that 'responsible disposal takes place as part of a museum's long-term collections development policy and starts with a curatorial review.' Financially-motivated disposal is still considered unethical and is likely to result in sanctions from professional and funding bodies. The annexed policy is clear that disposal will not be undertaken simply for financial reasons, but allows for the rationalisation of artefacts to focus on the Museum's core collections. The utilisation of sector best practice and the professional expertise within the CMS will ensure a robust process, and the ultimate decision will continue to sit with Cotswold District Council.

4. HUMAN REMAINS POLICY

- 5.** Human remains have a unique status, are often of high research value, and should be treated with dignity and respect. Given this sensitivity, there is a strong statutory and national guidance backdrop which has been taken into account in the drafting of this policy, attached at Annex B. The collections contain approximately 1400 human remains. Where human remains form part of an exhibition, either long or short-term, they will be displayed in a culturally appropriate, sensitive and informative manner and will always be accompanied by explanatory and contextual interpretation. Display of human remains for aesthetic or artistic purposes alone will not be permitted. The acquisition or disposal of human remains will be subject to the collections policy, along with extra considerations covered in the policy.



6. CABINET MEMBER DELEGATION

- 6.1** Current Museum Policies, and the new policies annexed today for consideration, vest decision-making in the Council as the Governing Body. Currently there are no specific delegations relating to museum activity, so all decisions sit with Cabinet.
- 6.2** The periodical review of policies sits well with Cabinet, as a relatively infrequent and strategic decision. However, decisions derived from the implementation of these policies could be delegated. This should include decisions on the accession or deaccession of artefacts. The policy is very clear on what grounds such decision should be made, and decisions may be time sensitive. A delegation to the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience would enable timely decisions, whilst ensuring due process and scrutiny.
- 6.3** It should be noted that the Constitution caps the value of property disposal and acquisition delegations to Cabinet Members at £250,000. Given the value of museum artefacts is better expressed in terms of their historical significance, it is often difficult to ascribe a financial value. Moreover, acquisition and disposals will often be through a gifting process rather than sale, so there is unlikely to be a clear valuation. As noted above, financially-motivated disposal is considered unethical and is likely to result in sanctions from professional and funding bodies. It is unlikely that many artefacts that the Museum would seek to dispose of will overtop the £250,000 ceiling, but in such an event, the decision would revert to Cabinet.
- 6.4** Similarly, decisions on operational priorities, expressed through the Museum's Forward Plan, should also sit with the Cabinet Lead.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1** While the Council has the authority to suggest amendments to the submitted policies, there is no clear alternative option to the approval of revised policies required by the Museum.
- 7.2** Cabinet could reserve the authority to make accession and deaccession decisions, but this could make the operation of the Collections Policy less dynamic than might be possible through a delegation, and thus at odds with developing practice within the museum sector.



8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** Cabinet is asked to review the proposed policies and approve them for use by the Corinium Museum
- 8.2** Cabinet is asked to agree a delegation to the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture, and Visitor Experience to enable timely operational decisions, on accessions, deaccessions and the forward plan.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The policies presented are essentially updated versions of the extant policies, so operationally should not create additional financial burdens
- 9.2** There are no financial implications to create a Cabinet Member delegation.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The purpose of this report is to assist the Council in fulfilling its role as the Governing Body of the Corinium Museum.
- 10.2** It should be noted that decisions on accessions and deaccessions may be legally complex. A Cabinet Member delegation, rather than alternative delegation, offers the assurance that any report will require sign-off by the Legal Team.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1** Should updated policies as presented not be approved, the Museum would not be operated under the latest guidance. Long term, this would imperil the Museum's accreditation.

A robust approach to accession and deaccession is required to protect the Museum's collection. The Collections Policy sets out a clear process and rationale, so it is appropriate for decisions guided by this process to be delegated. Conversely, too light a touch would be potentially more detrimental. It is considered that a Cabinet Member delegation ensures decision-making in the public eye, with oversight from the Council's scrutiny function, striking the right balance to support the operation of the Museum.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 12.1** Not applicable



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13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Not applicable

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)