

Response to a question put by Councillor Jane Milner-Barry in relation to the cabinet's consideration of the report "Swindon's Art and Museum collections and cultural provision" (Agenda Item No. 8)

Dear Cllr Milner-Barry,

Thank you for your involvement in the Cabinet debate on the Cultural Quarter and the Museum and Art Gallery. You raised the question around how the £20k budget pressure for SMAG was to be covered for 2019/20 and you were promised a written answer.

Firstly, it is worth re-iterating Cllr Heenan's point that the £20k savings target for SMAG is in no way disproportionately large when compared to the savings that are having to be found in other parts of the Council, where statutory services are performed, and indeed at STEAM, which has been subject to funding reductions for a number of years. Until this year, SMAG has not and for 19/20 the 20k requirement is equitable and reasonable.

Moving on, I can confirm that the savings can be made without detriment to opening hours. I can also confirm that we have approval to maintain the contracts of part time staff whose roles are essential to the continued operation of the Museum and Art Gallery. I can also confirm that the Cabinet paper invests a total of £750,000 in improving access to art and culture in the town, including bespoke repairs to the existing facility and scoping out work for a new cultural and civic hub. This is a significant investment, particularly so in today's financial climate.

In summary, the saving is anticipated to be realised in 3 ways:

1. Operational efficiencies (equipment, mileage, exhibition material, some match funding),
2. Increased income projections, specifically around charges to submit work to externals,
3. Carry over from HE project.

Of course, the £100k for art on tour will assist in mitigating some of the operational exhibition budgets.

Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage