



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

City Regeneration and Culture

Museum Collections
Care and Conservation Policy

2014 - 2018

Portsmouth Museums

Governing body Portsmouth City Council

Approved on: XXXXX

Review date: September 2018

1. Introduction:

1.1 This document outlines the policy for the care and conservation of the collections. It is part of Portsmouth Museums Collections Management framework which also includes the Collections Development Policy and Plan, Collections Documentation Policy and Plan, List of relevant legislation and standards, SPECTRUM download and the Procedures Manual.

1.2 The collections of Portsmouth City Council administered by the museums service are the 'unique selling point' and the reason for the existence of the service. They contribute to current city council policies and strategies and will continue to make major contributions to the cultural life of the city.

1.3 The museums service has a duty of care for the collections, recognised in its statement of purpose.

2. Definitions

2.1 'Collections' and 'collection' are used throughout this document to refer to groups of items held by the museums service.

2.2 'Items' may be of two or three dimensional material, natural science specimens, images in all media including digital, books and sound recordings. They comprise accessioned objects or unaccessioned material awaiting completion of acquisition procedures and objects on loan to the service.

2.3 'Conservation' is the overall term for the care of collections through active practical treatments and/or preventive measures.

2.4 'Preventive conservation' is defined as the planned and controlled change to the environment and surroundings of an item to reduce or eliminate, as far as possible, the known aspects of that item's deterioration.

2.5 'Interventive conservation' is defined as the active treatment of an item to stabilise its condition or to enhance its condition. It is also referred to as 'remedial conservation'.

3. Principles

3.1 To ensure that all collections within the responsibility of the museums service are cared for to the highest appropriate standards as achievable within available resources.

3.2 To ensure that collections care in the service is a continuing process, with improvements to the quality of conservation and storage being made as resources allow, to promote the long-term preservation of the items in our care.

3.3 To ensure that collections care in the service is based on a combination of preventive and interventive conservation as appropriate and as resources allow.

3.4 To manage risk to the collections as a tool in collections care to assist their long-term preservation whilst promoting access for service users.

3.5 To ensure that all staff within the service are aware of the roles and responsibilities for caring for the collections and their own roles in the process.

4. Application of the policy statement

4.1 All collections which the service is directly responsible for.

4.2 All Portsmouth City Council premises where the collections are stored and/or displayed.

4.3 Any objects belonging to third parties and on loan to the museums service.

4.4 Historic buildings and interiors within the museums service which are considered to be in effect collections items.

5. Collections overview

5.1 As part of an ongoing process members of the collections team will survey, benchmark and visually inspect the conditions in which collections are kept to determine priority areas for improvement in line with best practice as defined by the Museums, Libraries and Archive's Council's *'Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives Self Assessment Checklist'*, 2011, PAS 197:2009 and PAS 198:2012.

5.2 This process will be supported by action plans to guide and measure levels of improvement. Findings of the process and suggested improvements will be reported to the management team of the service, shared with other members of staff and reported to the Cabinet Member as appropriate.

6. Legal framework

The service's collections management is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectorial standards and guidelines. These are listed in a separate document as part of the collections management framework.

7. Preventive Conservation

Preventive conservation is the key aspect of the care of collections. It is ethical and cost effective. Measures taken to prevent further deterioration of museum items preserve as far as possible the status quo of the item and reduce the amount of costly interventive conservation required. As far as is possible, the service will manage the care of its collections through preventive conservation measures.

8. Systems and practices

Appropriate systems and procedures are an essential part of preventive conservation. Collections are safeguarded through the specification and management of:

- Building maintenance
- Physical security
- Intruder alarms
- Fire detection systems
- Fire and evacuation procedures
- Mechanical and electrical maintenance
- Key control
- Storage
- Environmental monitoring and control
- Collections management procedures
- Pest management
- Housekeeping
- Risk assessment and management
- Emergency response planning
- Management of personnel and resources

8.1 Building maintenance

The provision of suitable buildings and good maintenance are an essential part of collections care and conservation.

Portsmouth City Council Asset Management Service (AMS) is responsible for the provision and maintenance of suitable building conditions and will work with museum staff to achieve the best possible conditions for the collections, as resources allow, making full use of defect reporting systems.

When capital developments, repair programmes and changes of use to museum buildings are planned, the care of the collections will be taken into account and collections team staff will be involved in the planning process.

8.2 Physical security

The council will ensure that museum buildings and their fittings are physically secure to provide an important first line of protection.

Secure cases and secure fixing to display surfaces provide a high degree of physical protection for collections items. Items will be shown with regard to both public access and the security requirements of that item as well as environmental considerations.

8.3 Intruder alarms

Alarm systems will be specified to provide appropriate levels of deterrence as resources allow. The systems will be upgraded as technology develops and as operational needs require within available resources.

8.4 Fire detection systems

Fire detection systems will be installed and supplied to the highest specification as resources allow to protect people and the collections.

8.5 Fire and evacuation procedures

The service will ensure that effective and tested procedures are in place to enable the safe evacuation of people and collections items.

8.6 Mechanical and electrical maintenance

All relevant mechanical and electrical systems and equipment will be covered by service contracts and inspected periodically. The service will aim to keep portable appliance testing (PAT) of smaller electrical equipment up to date.

8.7 Key control

Key security is an important aspect of collections protection. Measures will be enforced to limit access to keys, reducing risk of unauthorised entry to collections storage areas.

8.8 Storage

All storage areas should provide physical security and environmental protection as appropriate for the nature of the material stored there.

It is the service's aim to provide appropriate conditions for all collections items in its care and to make improvements as resources permit.

As far as is possible, given resources and the nature of the museum buildings, the service will store and display items in a managed environment that minimises their rate of deterioration.

Appropriate storage furniture and packaging materials, as resources allow, will be used to protect items within storage areas.

8.9 Environmental monitoring and control

Understanding the existing environment within museum buildings and imposing control over potentially damaging conditions is a vital part of collections care.

As resources allow, the service will monitor the environmental conditions in areas where collections items are stored and displayed.

Temperature and relative humidity will be monitored and as far as is possible given the nature of our sites and as resources allow, controlled by a variety of means.

Visible light and ultra-violet radiation levels will be monitored and levels regarded as excessive for particular types of collections items will be controlled or eliminated by a variety of means.

Particulate pollution will be controlled as far as resources permit by good housekeeping and building maintenance.

8.10 Collections management procedures

Collections management procedures ensure that existing, incoming and exiting collections items are fully documented and accounted for.

The service aims to meet the *Spectrum* minimum level of documentation and procedures for accessioned and loan items.

8.11 Pest management

Many museum collections items are vulnerable to attack by a variety of pests.

The service will endeavour to ensure that any infestation is identified and dealt with promptly. Incoming items will be given particular attention to avoid introduction of pests.

8.12 Housekeeping

Regular routine cleaning of display and storage areas is beneficial to the public experience of the service and promotes care of collections.

Housekeeping cleaning programmes will be established and followed.

New front of house staff will receive instruction on museum cleaning regimes and the rationale underpinning the service's approach to housekeeping.

8.13 Risk assessment and management

All activities which involve the use of collections carry a potential risk to the longevity and condition of each collection item.

The service aims to manage and mitigate the risks to a level which is acceptable, balanced against the need to ensure that the collections are accessible. As far as is possible, risks to collections items through use, display, storage, activities and events will be identified. Mitigation procedures identified during the risk assessment will be imposed as part of the process to reduce the impact of the activity on the collections items and people involved in the activity.

Appropriate training in risk management will be given to staff and volunteers.

As far as is possible given the availability of resources, the collections team will ensure that the collections insurances lists are kept up to date.

8.14 Emergency response planning

Emergency preparedness and staff training will help to reduce loss and damage to museum collections items in the event of an emergency.

The service will ensure that procedures are in place to safeguard the collection in the event of disaster and emergencies.

The service will regularly review its Emergency Plan to ensure it is up to date. This will be shared with other city council officers as appropriate and staff will be given training in its application.

8.15 Management of personnel and resources

Caring for the collections is the responsibility of all staff. As part of the induction process, all staff and volunteers should be made aware of the issues around handling items and working within a museum environment.

The service has a commitment to the continuing development of staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise.

The collections team has a major role to play in raising awareness of collections care issues and by promoting and fostering good collection care practices.

All staff members have a responsibility to report any issues relating to care of collections to members of the collections team.

The service aims to make improvements to collections care, subject to available resources and the priorities of the business and operational plans.

For reasons of economy and sustainability, the service recommends passive controls over mechanical controls wherever feasible.

9. Displays, exhibitions and loans

9.1 When new displays and exhibitions are planned, collections care and conservation implications will be considered at an early stage.

9.2 Collections items selected for new displays and temporary exhibitions will be assessed for condition prior to final choice. Remedial treatment may be undertaken subject to available resources.

9.3 Members of the collections team will have input into the choice of furniture, materials, mounting and presentation aids used in the production of new displays and exhibitions to ensure that materials and methods do not compromise collections care requirements.

9.4 The service will ensure that lenders' security, conservation and care of collections requirements can be met before arranging to borrow items.

9.5 Satisfactory completion of a facilities report will normally be required before the service will agree to lend collections items to non-PCC venues.

9.6 Non-museum PCC venues will not be required to complete a full facilities report in advance of a loan but collections team members must be satisfied that the venue meets security and environmental requirements for the type of material to be lent.

10. Handling, moving and transport

10.1 Training for staff, volunteers and enquirers in the safe handling and use of the collections will preserve them for the future and in doing so will allow access to them for longer. Only people who have received appropriate training should handle items from the collection.

10.2 Movements of collections items will only take place when the correct arrangements and resources are present, so as to minimise the risk to the item and to people. If necessary formal risk assessments will be conducted and recorded prior to movements.

10.3 Requirements for environmental protection, standards of collections care and security as appropriate to the nature of the collections items concerned will be taken into consideration when items are transported or in use by enquirers, volunteers or members of staff.

11. Expertise and advice

11.1 The service is committed to the continuing development of its staff and to the building of relevant knowledge and expertise.

11.2 Staff will be encouraged to attend relevant training in collections care training as available and as affordable to extend their existing expertise.

11.3 Dissemination of collections care knowledge by members of staff will help promote good practice across the service and to external individuals and organisations.

11.4 Advice from external conservators and collections care professionals will be sought when necessary.

12. Interventive conservation

12.1 Interventive conservation should be underpinned by knowledge of the collection item and its constituent materials.

12.2 All proposed treatments will be discussed and agreed before work starts by the relevant members of the collections team. Treatments will be risk assessed and carried out in line with relevant health and safety guidelines and legislation.

12.3 Interventive conservation work will meet professional standards to minimise the risk to the object and to ensure that its integrity is not compromised.

12.4 Priorities for interventive conservation will be decided by the condition of the object, and display/exhibition need. Any cost of conservation required for external loans will be re-charged to the borrower.

12.5 Volunteers may conduct basic cleaning and first level conservation of collections items following instruction and under the supervision of collections team staff.

12.6 Volunteers with specialist skills evidenced by qualifications or experience may work on, or operate collections items unsupervised by agreement with collections team staff. All work and operation will be thoroughly discussed and agreed before commencement. Maintenance, conservation and running of vintage transport items are currently conducted under this arrangement. Service level agreements, notification and discussion regulate the activities of the volunteers who work in this area.

12.7 All interventive conservation procedures should be documented, whether in the object file or on the MODES database. As far as is possible, a photographic record will be kept of the conservation process.

12.8 Specialist interventive conservation is contracted out to external agents on a case-by-case basis. For this work only conservators accredited by the Institute of Conservation (ICON) will normally be selected. Non-accredited conservators may be used where their expertise cannot be supplied by an accredited conservator.

13. Working items

13.1 The service operates some of its historic machinery and transport as this adds considerably to our understanding of their purpose, significance and historic working conditions. Operating historic machinery and transport items may also contribute to its preservation and may help to retain or rediscover skills.

13.2 Such items will only be operated after stringent risk assessments have been conducted and in accordance with any health and safety regulations and any other legal requirements.

13.3 The arrangements for conservation of some vintage transport items are outlined in 12 above.

14. Items containing hazardous materials

14.1 The service will ensure that collections items containing or made of known hazardous materials are identified, labelled and documented with the relevant information about the nature of the hazard.

14.2 Collections items of this nature will be appropriately managed to meet all relevant health and safety regulations. All staff and volunteers who work with these items will be made aware of their obligations in this matter.

15. Destructive research techniques

On occasion it will be necessary to consider requests by researchers to conduct destructive techniques on collections items to further historic or scientific knowledge. Each case will be considered on its own merits and permission in advance will need to be obtained from the head of service and Cabinet Member.

16. Care and Conservation Plan

A separate Care and Conservation Plan governs the day to day implementation of the policies in the Care and Conservation Policy statement. It reflects organisational needs and priorities within available resources.

