

Executive
17 November 2020

Title: Transfer of bust of Sir Henry Cooper

Lead Officer: Chloe Johnson, Collections & Engagement Manager

Portfolio Holder: Moira-Ann Grainger

Public report / Confidential report: No

Wards of the District directly affected: None

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: No

Included within the Forward Plan: Yes, 1,150

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No

Consultation & Community Engagement: Discussion between Lily Crowther, Curator (Human History), LSAG&M and Sally Bills, Administrator, British Sporting Art Trust and Chloe Johnson, Collections & Engagement Manager, LSAG&M, and Alexandra Fletcher, Packard Curator, British Sporting Art Trust at the National Horse Racing Museum

Final Decision: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	14/10/20	Andrew Jones
Head of Service	12/10/20	Rose Winship
CMT	20/10/20	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	14/10/20	Andrew Jones
Monitoring Officer	13/10/20	Mike Snow
Finance	13/10/20	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	14/10/20	Councillor Grainger

1. Summary

- 1.1. A bronze bust of British heavyweight boxer Sir Henry Cooper by William Redgrave was acquired by Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (LSAG&M) in 1970. It is currently valued at £900. It does not fall under the Council's Collections Development Policy and has never been displayed.
- 1.2. LSAG&M wishes to dispose of the bust by transferring it to a more appropriate public collection.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. The Executive approves the presentation of the bust of Sir Henry Cooper as a gift to the British Sporting Art Trust.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The recommendation follows a review of the bust's relationship to Warwick District Council's (WDC) current Collections Development Policy, which sets out the principles, standards and legislation for responsible and ethical acquisition and disposal of collections. The Policy was last reviewed and approved by Executive in 2018.
- 3.2. The bust was purchased by a private individual in December 1969 from the Grosvenor Gallery, London, and donated to LSAG&M in 1970. It appears to have been selected due to the significance of boxing in Leamington Spa's sporting history. Sir Henry Cooper was born and lived in London; he has no connection to Leamington Spa. Artist William Redgrave was born in Essex and worked mainly in St Ives, Cornwall; he also has no connection to Leamington Spa.
- 3.3. LSAG&M has a permanent display on local boxer Randolph Turpin and a substantial collection of related material in store. The bust of Sir Henry Cooper is not relevant to the display or to the stored collection.
- 3.4. LSAG&M has a small collection of sculpture. The collection includes works by artists with local connections, and by internationally significant artists. Works from the collection are regularly included in the main Art Gallery displays and in temporary exhibitions of fine art.
- 3.5. The bust of Sir Henry Cooper has never been displayed, and the curators cannot foresee any circumstances in which it would be displayed at LSAG&M either in the context of local history or fine art.
- 3.6. The storage space at LSAG&M is very limited and the allocated space for sculpture in the Fine Art Store is currently at capacity, with limited room to accommodate new acquisitions.
- 3.7. The Curatorial team has carried out an extensive search to find a museum with a collection which may be more appropriate home for the bust. The British Sporting Art Trust (BSAT) was approached in July 2019 and has expressed an interest in the bust. The BSAT is building a collection of British

sporting art at Palace House Gallery, Newmarket, and also organises exhibitions at other public galleries. The BSAT collection focuses on fine art with sporting subjects, including boxing. The BSAT also cares for the British Council's collection of sporting art. BSAT staff have the relevant curatorial expertise to make best use of the bust for public benefit, and the resources to store and care for it appropriately in the long term.

- 3.12 The Collections Development Policy states that *'the museum will only dispose of objects for curatorial reasons'*. The criteria for disposal include: *'Falls outside the Collections Development Policy'; 'Public benefit better served by transfer to another institution.'*
- 3.13 Such a disposal requires the consent of the Executive: *'The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered.'*
- 3.14 If disposal is approved, the Collections Development Policy states that preference should be given to transfer to an Accredited Museum: *'Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.'* The BSAT is an Accredited Museum.
- 3.15 Taking into account the above, it is the view of the Collections & Engagement Manager that there are sound curatorial reasons and it is to the public benefit for the Council to present the bust of Sir Henry Cooper to the BSAT. This will allow it to be displayed in context with other related objects, and ensure it is properly cared for by specialist staff.

4. Policy Framework

- 4.1. Disposal of the bust would be consistent with the WDC Arts section's Collections Development Policy.
- 4.2 The Arts Service has a strong focus on the needs of local residents and visitors, with services being efficiently delivered at the least possible cost. This includes rationalisation of stored collections to maximise the limited available storage capacity on site at the Royal Pump Rooms. Disposal of the bust would make space and resources available for other objects.

5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from the proposed presentation of the bust as a gift to the British Sporting Art Trust. The BSAT would cover all costs associated with the transfer of the bust, including specialist packing and transport.
- 5.2 The bust has a reasonable market value. However, disposal by sale would put LSAG&M's status as an Accredited Museum at risk, thereby jeopardising

access to grant funding. The Museums Association Code of Ethics prohibits financially motivated disposals, apart from in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection, and then only as a last resort after other sources of funding have been explored. Furthermore, as the object was acquired by donation, any attempt at disposal by sale would be highly contentious and risk damaging potential future donors' trust in LSAG&M.

6. Risks

6.1. Not applicable

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

7.1. The bust could be retained by LSAG&M, which would be detrimental to its use for the public benefit and would increase pressure on storage space.

8. Background

8.1. n/a