

Committee(s)	Dated:
Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee	19 th July 2021
Subject: The Monument to the Great Fire of London Full Year Performance Report April 2020 to March 2021	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Contributing to a flourishing society, supporting a thriving economy and shaping outstanding environments
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
What is the source of Funding?	n/a
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Information
Report author: Chris Earlie, Head of Tower Bridge	

Summary

This report outlines the visitor attraction at The Monument for the period April 2020 to March 2021, focusing on the severe impact of the pandemic on the tourism economy.

Following closure as a public attraction in March 2020, The Monument to the Great Fire has remained closed throughout the financial year 20/21, due to the lack of scope for maintaining any level of social distancing in light of the severe space limitations within its historic structure.

The full-year financial position for the Monument shows income for the tourism business at £163,884, comprised entirely of the utilisation of the Government's furlough scheme. The decrease on last year is attributable to the severe impact of Covid-19, as experienced across central London attractions and throughout the UK.

Recommendation

I recommend your Committee notes the details of performance within this report, with specific relation to the impact of the pandemic.

Main Report

Background

The most recent report on performance for the Monument was received by the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee in November 2020, which provided details for the mid-year position April to September 2020.

The Impact of the Pandemic

1. The Monument closed to the public on 17 March 2020, in light of the continued expansion of the Covid-19 pandemic. All City Corporation attractions, performance spaces, museums, archives and libraries were closed to the public at this time also.
2. Visitor numbers and income generated at the Monument to the Great Fire would normally be included in this section, although it should be noted that the Monument has remained closed to the public entirely throughout the period April 2020- March 2021, as it was not possible to maintain any level of social distancing in light of the severe space limitations within its historic structure.

Table 1 - Monument Income

	Budget April to March 2020/21	ACTUAL April to March 2020/21	Variance to Target Over/(Under)
	£	£	
Furlough grants	91,000	163,884	80%

3. Similar to Tower Bridge, the Monument has made use of the Government's furlough scheme for the entire period of closure, with £163,884 in grants received.
4. The positive increase on the revised target figure set at mid-year is attributed to the Monument benefitting from the extension of the government's furlough scheme into 2021, with the second wave and national lockdown from early December 2020 not known at the point of revised estimates.

Table 2 - Monument Expenditure

	ACTUAL To March 2019/20	TARGET To March 2020/21	ACTUAL To March 2020/21	Variance to Target (Over)/Under
	£	£	£	
Total Employee Expenses	(315,270)	(256,000)	(252,810)	1 %
Premises Related Expenses	(44,810)	(39,000)	(73,240)	(88%)
Supplies & Services	(44,844)	(2,000)	(2,093)	(5%)
Recharges Within Funds	(11,896)	(12,000)	(8,597)	28%
Support Services	(109,341)	(97,000)	(95,751)	1%
Total Expenditure	(587,014)	(406,000)	(432,246)	(6%)

5. The overall expenditure position for the Monument was at £432,246 which is a 6% overspend against the revised target figure due to higher than anticipated

premises costs and works required while closed. The Monument utilised support made available by central government, including all attraction staff being placed on furlough throughout the whole financial year. The furlough reimbursement is effectively a £163,884 reduction in salary costs, although is represented as a receipt to City's Cash within Table 1 and not shown within this expenditure data.

6. The Monument retained a proportion of staff costs during the year, which comprised staff involved in maintaining the property while closed, including routine maintenance and security provision.
7. Other retained staff costs relate to continuing to develop and deliver the learning programme at The Monument, throughout closure and given the inclusion of the Great Fire within the national curriculum. This currently includes the provision of virtual sessions for schools, the development of dynamic online content for schools studying the Great Fire, and piloting online family learning activities as detailed below.

'Taking Our Services Online' During Closure

8. Following closure of the attraction on 17 March The Monument became 'physically closed but digitally open': similar to its peer attractions, a number of services were quickly developed or redeveloped digitally in an effort to stay relevant, visible and provide meaningful cultural content and learning resources for public engagement during lockdown.
9. Despite the Monument remaining closed to visitors, updates to the website and social media were made regularly in an effort to remain visible and 'digitally open'. Website users were offered a series of podcasts and various digital content focused on the Great Fire and the Monument's Frieze.

Education and Community Engagement

10. Despite the Monument's continued closure, the learning programme has continued to engage audiences with its themes and stories. Virtual Q&A sessions proved popular with core Key Stage 1 audiences, as did a collaborative virtual Family Activity Day, delivered in partnership with Barbican Libraries. A new partnership was also established with London Metropolitan University, in which collaboration focused on developing and delivering a module for students undertaking the university's inaugural MA in Public Art and Performance. This project generated creative responses from students, and it is anticipated that the relationship will continue in future years. Community talks have been delivered with AgeUK and Open Age, engaging an entirely new audience for the programme.
11. Digital approaches were also adopted for learning provision, including workshops and online resources, much of which have been retained as better ways of working as we move towards a 'new normal'.

12. Collaborations with other peer sites and organisations such as Culture Mile Learning and its membership, offer opportunities to contribute to projects which tackle specific learning or social needs; build capacity of all partners; and make best use of the skills and resources the City has to offer.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. The Monument would normally complement the Corporate Plan in contributing to a flourishing society by providing access to world-class heritage, culture and learning to people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds and in shaping outstanding environments by protecting, curating and promoting heritage assets, cultural experiences and events.

Financial Implications

14. Despite a good year in 2019/20 for the tourism business at the Monument, the impact of the pandemic across 2020/21 has reduced any scope for operating and generating income. Even if the Monument had been able to open during the four months of the year in which visitor attractions were permitted to do so in line with Government restrictions, income would have been severely impacted due to reduced capacities and significantly reduced visitor footfall. As mentioned however, the severe space restrictions within the structure meant no level of distancing was possible and as such it remained closed for the entire financial year.
15. The severe impact of the pandemic on the Monument's ability to open as a visitor attraction has resulted in a deficit at year-end for The Monument of £268,362. This was forecast at mid-year to be in the region of £315,000, although the combination of the extension of the Government's furlough scheme and reductions in expenditure have assisted in reducing losses as detailed in this report.

Consultees

16. The Chamberlain has been consulted in the production of this report.

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