



# Ramsgate Town Council

## Collections Policy

*Note: This policy has been based upon the Arts Council's "Accreditation Scheme for Museums & Galleries in the United Kingdom: Collections Development Policy Template". The Council does not plan at this time to establish a Town Council, and the Council is not currently in the position to adhere to all Spectrum (the UK collection management standard for accredited Councils) standards, some of which have been omitted from the text below.*

*Name of governing body: Ramsgate Town Council*

*Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022*

*Policy review procedure: The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.*

*Date at which this policy is due for review: December 2027*

At this time it is not deemed necessary to inform the Arts Council England of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

### 1. Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

#### 1.1 The Council's statement of purpose is:

The Council intends to seek and conserve items of object and archive relevant to the heritage of the historic town of Ramsgate and parishes. The Local Government Act 1972 S226 gives the Council powers to retain parish property and documents

#### 1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

#### 1.3 By definition, the Council has a long-term purpose and holds collections for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in

the collection.

- 1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5 The Council recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements will take into account limitations imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care collection arrangements.

*The Council is unable to achieve Spectrum primary procedures for collections management at this time.*

- 1.6 The Council will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Council can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- 1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:
  - the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
  - the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
  - the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
  - extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
  - the item under consideration lies outside the Council's established core collection

## 2. History of the collections

On the formation of Ramsgate Town Council (2009) the Council acquired a civic collection of object and archive from the Ramsgate Charter Trustees. This included the town silver collection and regalia such as the town mace and the office of mayor badge and chain. The civic collection of object and archive was previously acquired by the Ramsgate Charter Trustees from the Borough of Ramsgate that was dissolved in 1974 due to local government re-organisation of that year that saw the formation of Thanet District Council.

## 3. An overview of current collections

At present the Ramsgate Town Council civic collection of object and archive is currently housed at the Custom House.

Following an acquisition of former Borough of Ramsgate documentation from Thanet District Council that Thanet District Council acquired in 1974. It was decided in 2019 to loan the said documentation to the Ramsgate Heritage Regeneration Trust for interpretation and digitalisation . The former Borough of Ramsgate documentation is currently stored with the Ramsgate Heritage Regeneration Trust.

## 4. Themes and priorities for future collecting:

- Material relating to Ramsgate as a town.
- Material relating to specific events in the town or the surrounding area
- Material relating to the civic elements of the town:
  - The Mayoralty
  - Jurats/Town Councillors
  - The office of the Town Clerk
  - The role of the Town Sergeant
  - Mayoral and civic insignia
- Material relating to working life including Sandwich's role as a port.
- Material relating to Ramsgate's role within the confederation of Cinque Ports
- Material relating to businesses
- Material relating to premises in Sandwich
- Materials relating to personal and private collections of significant figures and families in Ramsgate.
- Material relating to leisure and community life including
  - social & sporting clubs and pastimes
  - family life
  - Charities
  - Churches and their parishes
  - Schools
- Reference library collection for internal and external research purposes
- Material will be collected for handling and education purposes as appropriate.
- Oral/Visual history in relation to Ramsgate or the surrounding area.

- Original photographs will be collected as well as news cuttings and copy photographs, postcards and cartes-de-visites.
- Ephemera related to the above areas.
- Born digital material will be collected where it meets the collecting areas above. We will collect digital copies of materials where the donor has the rights to donate it and we have the equipment and software to access the materials.

The following areas will not be collected unless they are special cases and approved by the Council

- Large scale machinery and equipment will not be collected due to constraints on interpretation and conservation unless in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear link to the town's story, compelling audience engagement opportunities and resources are available for its long-term care and use.
- Personal items that are not related to the above criteria.
- Duplicates that cannot then be used for handling collections or further examples.

## 5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

**5.1** The Council recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

**5.2** The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

Where the Council holds copies of original paperwork, and the original is known to be safe and accessible, these will be digitalised and disposed of.

## 6. Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

**6.1** The Council recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

## 7. Collecting policies of other Councils

**7.1** The Council will take account of the collecting policies of other Councils and organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

**7.2** Specific reference is made to the following Council(s)/organisation(s):

Kent County Archives  
Ramsgate (Heritage Regeneration) Trust  
Ramsgate Maritime Council\*

\*The Maritime Council is currently in a period of change and it is not yet known what the governing body will be going forwards. Any disposals or loans to this organisation will be on the proviso that this be a properly constituted body that can guarantee the safe keeping of artefacts.

**7.3** It is not intended that the Council will enter into a joint acquisition agreements.

**8.** Acquisition

**9.1** The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer will authorise the acquisition of artefacts, in conjunction with the Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Council does not have a budget for acquisitions. The decision to vire money for the purpose of acquisitions must be approved by the Council.

**9.2** The Council will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

**9.3** In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Council will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

**9.** Human remains

**10.1** The Council does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

**10.** Biological and geological material

**11.1** The Council will not acquire any biological or geological material.

**11. Archaeological material**

**12.1** The Council will not acquire any archaeological material.

**12. Exceptions**

**13.1** Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the Council is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the Council will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The Council will document when these exceptions occur.

**13. Spoliation**

**14.1** The Council will use ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions’, issued by the National Council Directors’ Conference in 1998, and report on them in accordance with the guidelines.

**14.2** The Council will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national Councils in 1999 by the Councils and Galleries Commission.

**14. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

*The following statements must also be included, if relevant to the Council:*

**15.1** The Council’s governing body, acting on the advice of the Council’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in Councils’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The Council will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

*Councils in Scotland should replace the wording (“Guidance for the care of human remains in Councils” issued by DCMS in 2005) with (“Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Scottish Councils” issued by MGS in 2011).*

*For all human remains in England, Wales and Northern Ireland:*

**15.2** The disposal of human remains from Councils in England, Northern

Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in Councils'.

**15. Disposal procedures**

- 16.1** The Council will reference Spectrum primary procedures on disposal as a matter of good practice and adhere to this guidance where practicable.
- 16.2** The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.3** When disposal of a Council object is being considered, the Council will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange or as a last resort – destruction.
- 16.5** 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 Council's collections and collections held by Councils and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice may be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Council will also be sought.
- 16.6** The Council may need to seek professional advice when disposing of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety).
- 16.7** 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 organisations likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any organisation to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the Council community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's "Find an Object" web listing service, an announcement in the Councils Association's Councils Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).

- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Council may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by the Council from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England. The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.11** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal (where practicable for the Council).

### **Disposal by exchange**

- 16.12** The Council will consider disposing of items by exchange. The nature of disposal by exchange means that the Council will not necessarily be in a position to exchange the material with another organisation. The governing body will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 16.13.1** In cases where the governing body wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange material directly with Accredited or non-Accredited organisations, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-5 will apply.
- 16.13.2** If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific organisation, other organisations which collect in the same or

related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.

**16.13.3** Any proposed exchanges will be advertised by the Council and a period of not less than two weeks must be allowed for comments to be received. After which the Town Clerk & RFO can decide to progress with the exchange or take the matter to Council/Committee meeting for consideration.

**16.13.4** Exchanges will be recorded in an appropriate Council/Committee minutes (either for noting, or approval).

### **Disposal by destruction**

**16.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

**16.15** It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

**16.16** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.

**16.17** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

**16.18** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the Council workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.