

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER COUNCIL

SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	22 January 2016
Report of:	Peter Bates - Chief Operating Officer, Cheshire East Mark Wynn – Director of Finance, Cheshire West & Chester
Subject/Title:	Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Shared Service: Accommodation Project Update

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the current position with regard to the Archives relocation proposal and recommends a way forward for the proposal. It also reports on the vision for the Archives and Local Studies service and on the award of Accredited Status to the service, together with the recommendations for the service arising from the Accreditation inspection.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

1. Progress to date on the Archives relocation project as set out in this report be noted.
2. Proposals for the future Joint Committee decisions concerning this project as outlined in Section 11 of this report be endorsed.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The need to find a replacement facility for the current Record Office in Duke Street, Chester, has been recognised by elected members from both authorities and is a key recommendation arising from the Accreditation report from November 2015.
- 3.2 Since 2012 work has been carried out on building a detailed understanding of the requirements and potential costs of an archive facility, but it is important to note that this facility, while important in its own right for access to and preservation of Cheshire's archival heritage, is the base for a service which engages a wider range of people than visitors to the Record Office, through outreach programmes, access in libraries and online. This project is about that wider engagement with people, bringing the collections closer to them.
- 3.3 In order to progress this project, both authorities will need to agree a shared vision for the service and agree the next steps. Accredited status lasts for 6 years, but the

service will need to report on progress towards securing better accommodation in Autumn 2017.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both CE and CWAC so all wards are affected in both Councils.

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications including

6.1 None.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Costs for this service are shared equally between Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council. To ensure that this project is able to progress to the next stage, as outlined in 11.3 and 11.4 of this report, both Councils have submitted business proposals into their respective budget setting processes. This resource will help to ensure that this project moves forward, in order to meet the statutory requirements and the expectation of service users and other key stakeholders.

7.2 The service will submit an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in order to propose a business case for relocating the service and request additional financial support from the HLF to enable this, but it is also anticipated that the capital receipt from the sale of the current Record Office in Duke Street, Chester, can be put towards delivery of the relocation project.

7.3 Financial implications of the preferred options will be explored with a more detailed options appraisal in order to better inform the decisions made by the Joint Committee and each authority on future service provision. This is estimated to cost £4K and will be funded through the service's revenue budget.

7.4 The public consultation exercise, as outlined in paragraph 11.5, will be undertaken internally at minimum cost to the Councils.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 The Shared Services Administrative Agreement sets out the overall arrangements in relation to the manner in which authorities will work together. The Shared Service Agreement sets out the mechanisms by which the Shared Services operates.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Changing and diverging client requirements can make it more difficult for Shared Services to provide an equitable response and therefore periodic review of the sharing arrangements are required to ensure that they remain viable for all parties.
- 9.2 The capital bidding processes of each council will need to be coordinated, so as to ensure the parallel progress of the Archives accommodation project through both councils and to reduce duplication of effort.
- 9.3 Formal discussions with the HLF will begin early this year, as noted in the project timetable (Appendix 1), to ensure that officers have a good understanding of the HLF's requirements and reduce the risk of failure to secure external funding.

10.0 Background, Vision and Options

- 10.1 As previously reported, it has been identified by The National Archives and recognised by elected Members in both authorities that the current building which houses the service is no longer fit for purpose. Options for the future delivery of the service were recommended to Joint Committee in January 2015. Since that time the service has been awarded Accredited Archive status under the new UK Archives Accreditation Scheme and although the feedback report (Appendix 2) from The National Archives was very positive about the direction in which the service was moving, it noted that:

“the service’s future development lies with finding new premises which will benefit the collections and allow its people-centred vision to be delivered more effectively than is currently possible”.

- 10.2 In order to satisfy the requirements of the Accreditation Scheme, a long term solution to this requirement for new premises will need to be found within the next two years. In addition, in order to meet external funding requirements and deadlines, firm plans for the service’s long term future must be in place by Spring 2017. Delivery of the project is anticipated from late 2018/19 onwards.
- 10.3 Facilitated by an independent consultant, the service has recently been working with stakeholders, customers and staff to develop a strong, ambitious vision, in preparation for a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support the delivery of this vision. This follows informal advice from other archive services and from the HLF itself, whose priorities are around benefits to heritage, benefits to people, more people participating in heritage, and innovation.
- 10.4 The vision (see Appendix 3) for the service is

“Easy access to histories: collecting evidence of Cheshire communities’ lives past and present, for everyone, for the future”

The key outcomes arising from this vision, to be delivered over a 10-year period, are that Cheshire Archives and Local Studies will

- A) have secured a new building with a welcoming, inspirational environment that is more attractive and accessible to visitors, which provides access to collections and with space for staff, volunteers, collections and future growth;
- B) have made a major improvement in its provision and use of ICT to bring the collections closer to people;
- C) be reaching more and a wider range of people through public activities onsite and around the county, through its use of information technology, through new opportunities to showcase the collections and by having a more welcoming, accessible and well-located building. We will have transformed local provision in libraries and established local Heritage Hubs;
- D) have developed new and innovative partnerships leading to an increased profile across Cheshire and beyond;
- E) have increased and diversified funding, putting the service on a more sustainable basis;
- F) be a recognised centre of excellence in collections, staff, knowledge and services, consolidating and developing expertise;
- G) be a stronger, more visible, better recognised corporate resource for Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils.

10.5 As a means of delivering these priorities, both authorities now need to take steps to further investigate how the service can evolve and be delivered to meet the expectations and aspirations of key stakeholders and customers. This will also help to inform the future HLF bid.

Service delivery options

- 10.6 A number of options to relocate the CALS and continue to provide access to the collection while affording new and appropriate levels of accommodation and storage have been considered by officers following. These are as follows:
1. 1 main base, with access and storage onsite, combined with satellite access points;
 2. 2 main bases, with access and storage onsite, combined with a small number of satellite access points;
 3. 1 main base, with access and a combination of onsite and offsite storage, with satellite access points;
 4. 2 main bases, with access and a combination of onsite and offsite storage, with a small number of satellite access points;
 5. All access to collections is virtual. Storage in on one site with no public access;
 6. 1 main base with access, but no storage onsite. Series of satellite access points and 1 offsite store.
- 10.7 Options 3 and 4 have been identified as the preferred options to take forward and Appendix 4 presents the options appraisal.
- 10.8 The recommendation is to undertake a more detailed options analysis of options 3 and 4. This is in line with the options recommended by Joint Committee in January

2015 and will involve the use of staff and stakeholder workshops and telephone interviews with key stakeholders. The criteria (priority criteria in bold) for this exercise and for a future site options appraisal will be:

1. Cost – capital and revenue.

2. Creates a high level of accessibility via transport and online

3. Maintains the security of the records

4. Maintains the quality of service

5. Is sustainable in the long term

6. The Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders would fund the option

7. The option is flexible and adaptive to future change

8. Option will foster partnerships

9. Provides income opportunities

10. Adds value to the community

11. Helps the service to reach more people and new people

12. Helps to deliver the vision for the service

13. Increases visibility of the service within the councils

14. Secures Accredited Archive and Place of Deposit statuses

11 Moving Forward

- 11.1 An independent expert will be contracted to deliver the more detailed options analysis, as described above. This will form the basis of a report recommending a preferred service delivery model which will be presented to members of Joint Committee in March 2016.
- 11.2 A Project Inquiry will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in April 2016.
- 11.3 Once agreement on a preferred service delivery model is secured, if required the services of an independent expert will be secured to carry out a rigorous options appraisal of sites already identified as potential homes for the service against the criteria above. It is anticipated that a recommendation about a preferred site(s) will be brought to Joint Committee in July.
- 11.4 Funding is currently being sought internally (see paragraph 7.1) to support the development of a Round 1 funding bid to HLF. This will be required to secure the services of specialists who will prepare key evidence for the funding bid to the standard required by HLF (e.g. architectural work). It is generally recommended that the development of a Round 1 bid should take 12 months and it is anticipated that a Round 1 bid will be submitted in April 2017.
- 11.5 A key part of the development of the Round 1 bid will be extensive public consultation. Permission to run this consultation, which will be as wide-reaching as possible in order to inform plans to reach a wider audience for the service, will be sought once the preferred delivery option is determined.
- 11.6 At the time when a Round 1 bid is submitted to HLF, the match funding from the Councils will need to be in place. It is currently anticipated that this will be in the region of £4.2 M from each authority, notwithstanding any significant changes. The

capital receipt from the sale of the Record Office in addition to this. Work is being progressed to ensure that this funding is part of both Councils' capital programmes.

12.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writers:

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Background Documents:

Documents are available for inspection at:

Cheshire East Democratic Services

Westfields

Middlewich Road

Sandbach

CW11 1HZ

or:

Cheshire West & Chester Democratic Services

HQ Building,

Nicholas Street,

Chester,

CH1