

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER COUNCIL**

## **SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	28 March 2014
<b>Report of:</b>	Cheshire East – Chief Operating Officer Cheshire West & Chester – Director of Resources
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Cheshire Archives and Local Studies feasibility study progress report

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

This report provides a summary of Stage 1 of the feasibility study relating to the potential relocation of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies. It also seeks approval of the process of public consultation relating to the choice of sites.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 That the report on Stage 1 of the feasibility study be noted.

2.2 That the public consultation be approved.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The report aims to ensure that the Joint Committee are up to speed on progress with the feasibility study and that the consultation plan meets the required approval of Joint Committee.

### **4.0 Wards Affected**

4.1 This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester so all wards are affected in both Councils.

### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

5.1 This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester so all wards are affected in both Councils.

### **6.0 Policy Implications**

6.1 None.

### **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 None.

## **8.0 Legal Implications**

8.1 None.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 The site options appraisal and feasibility study, together with public consultation, will help to provide an objective, transparent assessment of the best site for new premises, thus aiding future decision-making.

## **10.0 Background**

### Feasibility study

- 10.1 In the third quarter of 2013/14 a procurement exercise was undertaken to appoint a consultant to carry out a site options appraisal (Stage 1) and feasibility study (Stage 2). The consultants appointed were Design Group – Chester (DGC).
- 10.2 DGC were presented with 20 sites in Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East, identified by the respective Property/Assets teams according to a high level brief which focussed on size of site, accessibility, suitability in terms of flood risk and environmental pollution and the potential to contribute to regeneration projects.
- 10.3 DGC spent four weeks assessing each site against 6 key requirements, assigning a 'score' for each. A chart indicating the scores forms Appendix 2 of this report.
- 10.4 In mid February member workshops were held in Sandbach and Chester at which members were presented with DGC's assessment of the sites and invited to comment and select those sites which should go to the feasibility study stage. The sites selected were

#### Cheshire East

Crewe Library  
Crewe Bus Station  
Middlewich, town centre plot  
Crewe Municipal Buildings

#### Cheshire West and Chester

Northwich, Watling Street offices  
Winsford, Verdin Exchange  
Chester, former Enterprise Centre  
Ellesmere Port, EPIC Centre

A study into the feasibility of remodelling the current Record Office in Duke Street, Chester, will also be undertaken.

- 10.5 The feasibility study is due to be completed at the end of March 2014. A verbal update will be supplied to members of the Joint Committee.

### Consultation

- 10.6 Discussions with the Councils' Research and Intelligence/Research and Consultation teams made it clear that a public consultation would have to be

carried out as part of the project, because of the potential impact on the current visitors to the Archives and Local Studies service.

10.7 An overview of the consultation plan is as follows:

Support

The consultation will be run with the support of the Councils' Research and Intelligence/Research and Consultation teams.

Timetable

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, from 7 April to 28 June 2014. The results of the consultation will be analysed in time for reporting to portfolio holders and the Shared Services Joint Committee in the Autumn of 2014, as part of the report on the feasibility study currently being undertaken.

Objectives

The consultation is being run to gather views of customers and potential customers as to the most important factors to consider when deciding on the site of potential new premises for the Archives and Local Studies service. The consultation format and process will be agreed with both portfolio holders.

Type of consultation

Different forms of consultation will be run, appropriate to the audience being consulted. The methods used will include an online survey, paper forms, face-to-face consultation, and publicity in local press and online. It is likely that informal verbal comments will be received, as well as letters/emails to the service, and procedures will be put in place to ensure that these are recorded as part of the consultation process. Any data collected will be maintained and used in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act.

Geographic scope

As the Archives and Local Studies service is a shared service, the consultation will be run across both CEC and CWAC, while because of the Service Level Agreement the service has with Warrington and Halton Borough Councils for the delivery of archive services, the consultation will also be run across those boroughs. Because of the service's international audience, the survey will also be aimed at customers and other stakeholders outside of the four boroughs.

Feedback

An analysis of responses will be made available online and at the Cheshire Record Office.

Next steps

- 10.8 A business plan and external funding strategy are currently being developed, to look at potential sources of funding, including, but not restricted to, the Heritage Lottery Fund. The delivery of outreach programmes will be an essential part of an HLF bid, while the local delivery of services will also be further developed through a review of Local Studies provision in CWAC and

CEC libraries. Business planning will focus on commercial opportunities which arise from the proposed project. This work will be completed in July.

- 10.9 It is anticipated that a report, consisting of the feasibility study, results of the public consultation, external funding strategy and business plan, will be completed in the Autumn of 2014.

## **11.0 Conclusion**

- 11.1 This report provides a summary of progress with the feasibility study, the next steps and its timescale. It aims to support Joint Committee in its future decision-making about the future of the proposal to relocate the Archives and Local Studies shared service.

## **12.0 Access to Information**

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

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