

Key Decision: N

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Date of Meeting: 13th April 2021

Report Title: Cheshire Archives: A Story Shared

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jill Rhodes, Corporate Services and Public Health

Senior Officer: Executive Director Place

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project and provides the context for submission of a second stage application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF).
- 1.2. The service identifies, collects, and cares for archives on behalf of Cheshire's communities.
- 1.3. This project would deliver two new History Centres; one in Chester and one in Crewe. These will provide fit for purpose to enable the storage and interpretation collections
- 1.4. This project supports the Councils Corporate Plan in particular, the strand '*A Thriving and Sustainable Place*'. The project also supports the Crewe Cultural Strategy, the Council's Cultural Framework and the regeneration programme for Crewe Town Centre.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Endorse the approach regarding the next steps in the development and delivery of this project.
- 2.2 Note that the Executive Director Place will take all necessary actions to develop the project and will submit a bid for Grant Funding to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to enable the delivery of the second stage of the

proposed 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project (in line with the constitution).

- 2.2 Note that any future acceptance of grants will be undertaken in accordance with the constitution and finance procedure rules.
- 2.3 Delegate authority to Executive Director- Place in consultation with Director of Governance and Compliance to agree terms in relation to the grant funding with Cheshire West and Chester Council who are acting as the accountable body for this project.
- 2.4 Note that a report to update on delivery of the project will be considered at a future meeting of the relevant committee.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The recommendations in this report are to enable the development and delivery of the Archives Project. This includes development of a History Centre in Crewe to support the delivery and development of the Archives Service and the regeneration of Crewe.
- 3.2. The overall project is due for a mid-year review by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It will be important to demonstrate at this point the council's commitment for the second stage bid for the project to be submitted.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The project is seen to be a key component of the future development of the archives service and for the Crewe town centre regeneration programme and as such no other options have been considered.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Archives and Local Studies Service is a shared service with Cheshire West and Chester, currently based at Duke Street in Chester. The current facility is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be replaced to maintain accreditation. The requirement to relocate the Archives and Local Studies Service has been recognised by both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. A new future service delivery model has been agreed. This model sees two new history centres being established – one in Chester and the other in Crewe.
- 5.2. This will be in addition to an improved service offer in libraries, extended online services and a more extensive activity and event programme.
- 5.3. The decision route to date is as follows:
 - 5.2.1 In September 2016 the Joint Shared Services Committee recommended a two centre solution. This was the result of extensive discussions between members and officers in both authorities, taking account of previous consultations and options analysis work.

As a result it was agreed that Chester and Crewe should be the focus for the service.

5.2.2 In September 2016 The Cabinet at both Councils endorsed the proposal to develop two new history centres.

5.2.3 On 12th September 2017, Cabinet approved the following recommendations:

- Approve the proposed vision for a new History Centre in Crewe
- Approve the proposed application to Heritage Lottery Fund for Cheshire Archives and Local Studies.
- Approve the proposed terms of reference for governance of the project.
- Agree that the Old Library site in Crewe is selected for news History Centre.
- Note the proposed timescale for the project.
- Note the capital costs required to delivery this project including costs of demolition.

5.4. The current development phase of the project runs until Autumn 2021, at which point a delivery phase grant application of £4.5 million needs to be submitted to the NLHF in order to comply with NLHF directions. The delivery phase will see the construction of the centres and delivery of the activity programme.

5.5. The NLHF gave permission to start the project in March 2020. The project is a joint Project with Cheshire West and Chester Council, managed through an approved governance arrangement for the shared project. The current development phase of the project runs for 18 months and the current funding will deliver:

- piloting of activities to engage new audiences with archives across the county
- development of detailed plans (to Royal Institute of British Architects RIBA Stage 3) for the proposed new centres in Chester and Crewe
- development of a detailed business plan
- writing of a delivery phase funding application

5.6. Since June, work programmes have focussed on:

5.6.1. The recruitment of consultants to support the development of the activity plan for the delivery phase. The activity plan is central to the business case both to the two Councils and to the Heritage Fund.

5.6.2. The key themes within it are:

- More diverse range of people engaging in different ways with archives
- Transforming access to collections
- Developing learning opportunities
- Health and wellbeing
- Developing and exchanging skills

5.6.3. Piloting new digital activities and tools for engaging more people, and a more diverse range of people, with archives. The Archives team have, by example, developed:

- Online exhibitions for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) History Month and Black History Month
- Live, web-based, training for community history groups
- An online training programme for library staff in both Councils to help them develop their knowledge about the local history collections in their libraries and to support people who visit libraries to research family and local history
- A range of new resources such as quizzes and family history activities which are aimed at supporting interaction between different generations within families during the Covid-19 pandemic

5.6.4. Design team meetings to begin more detailed work on the proposed centres in Crewe and Chester. To date this work has focussed on the proposed history centre in Crewe which has reached RIBA 2 stage to achieve a high quality concept design for what will be a prominent town centre building contribution to town centre regeneration. The design work required to submit an application to NLHF is currently expected to be completed in summer 2021.

5.6.5. Working with the project's appointed Interpretation Planning consultants on the Interpretation Plan which will:

- Provide a detailed plan for how the stories from the archives and local studies collections will be told in both history centres
- Detail how these stories will be told digitally and in local libraries to reach an audience across the county and further afield
- Propose a methodology for engaging residents to capture the 'community memory' to enhance the stories being told as a result of this project

5.6.6. Reviewing the impact of Covid-19 on the project programme. In discussion with the NLHF, it has been agreed that the completion deadline for the delivery phase has been extended up to March 2022 with a grant application being considered for Autumn 2021. Progress reviews are being held every 3 months; these will help to mitigate any risks to the delivery phase application.

- 5.7. Senior Members from both Councils continue to receive briefings on progress every two months as part of the project governance for a joint Cheshire East/Cheshire West and Chester project. In addition regular briefings are provided to Shared Services Joint Committee and to local ward members.
- 5.8. Should the funding application be successful, the delivery phase would begin in Spring 2022. The delivery phase of the project is programmed to last 3 years.
- 5.9. The Council's Capital Programme currently has match funding of £6.44million on the addendum to support this application. This is being matched by the same amount from Cheshire West and Chester Council. Prior to submission of the funding application, an updated, detailed business case will be submitted to seek approval for the Council's funding (indicated on the Capital addendum) to be included in the Capital Programme to cover the delivery phase. The delivery and cost plan for the project will be developed by the Project Board based on the approved Capital budget.
- 5.10. The designs for both History centres will be prepared up to RIBA stage 3 to enable submission to NLHF. Public consultation will be required on the final proposals for the centres as part of the submission to NLHF and is currently included in the project activity plan and in RIBA stage 3. Arrangements for consultation will be developed by the Project Board in accordance with Council guidelines and project Governance arrangements.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. Advice on compliance with grant terms and conditions, the Council's financial and contract procedure rules and on contracts will be sought for the development stage of the project including where necessary appointment of consultants to assist with development of detailed plans to RIBA Stage 3. Legal advice will also be sought on future funding bids to ensure appropriate governance approval

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. Permission to accept and spend the development phase grant from the Heritage Fund has been secured in both Councils. Match funding of £470,803 for the development stage is in place, made up of an equal contribution of from each Council.
- 6.2.2. Funding to support the current development stage is within both Councils' capital programmes. Funding for the delivery stage is referenced in both capital programmes with £6.44 million currently on the Council's capital programme addendum. A funding strategy will be developed and a

detailed business case will be submitted to the Capital Programme Board, prior to submission of the funding application. The final scheme and future revenue implications would also require approval if the delivery phase funding application was successful. This will be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 22/23.

- 6.2.3. If this funding bid was not approved there would remain a need to replace the current archives facility. In this case there would be a need to revisit the programme, strategy and funding and there would be no guarantee that the scheme would progress. Archives accreditation is dependent upon a replacement facility being provided. At this point the current scheme provides the optimum route to deliver the requirement and was previously approved on that basis.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. There are no direct Policy implications

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. A central theme of the project is to diversify the audience for archives and ensure a new service is built around the needs of its target audiences. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in order to ensure that the project does not inadvertently have a negative impact on particular groups or communities.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. There are no direct Human Resources implications at this stage

6.6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.6.1. The project manager maintains a detailed risk register and risks and issues are reported to the Project Board and Portfolio Holders on a regular basis. Risks are managed by the Project Board in consultation with officers in both Councils.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people at this stage. Young people are a target audience for the project and will be consulted about potential activities as the project develops.

6.9. Public Health Implications

- 6.9.1. Pilot activities are being developed with the aim of supporting the health and wellbeing of residents within both boroughs.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

- 6.10.1. The proposed new centres will be designed to a high sustainable building standard, to be as energy efficient as possible, in order to assist the Council in meeting its carbon neutral target.

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1. This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, so all wards are affected in both Council areas.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. Public consultation will take place to gather views on the final designs of the centres.

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. Background documents are available on request.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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