

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 7 th November 2019
Report Subject	Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to inform members about the exciting project currently in development to create an innovative and sustainable archive service. The intention is that the Council will be able to maintain its strong and proud track record in curating and preserving important historical documents, fulfilling its statutory requirements in relation to records management and, at the same time, modernise and expand its offer to the public through the use of digital technology and enhanced facilities and activities.

The project also aims to extend and enhance the role of archive services in delivering key objectives of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. It will achieve this by using its unique resources in a ground-breaking way to engage and support all sections of the local community from the youngest to the oldest, for those who may need support for their health and wellbeing, for those who undertake professional research, for those who dabble in local or family history and for those who may never have considered that an archive has something to offer them. The intention of this project is that it will lead the way nationally on how audiences engage with archive material.

The ground-breaking feature of this project is the development of a new, 21st century and environmentally friendly archive facility on the County Hall campus, co-located with our nationally important producing theatre in a joint service arrangement with Denbighshire County Council who also have historically important collections and have been looking for similar solutions to protect and enhance their archive service.

The proposal is to create a cultural hub for the region that is Wales and UK renowned for its building design, collection curation and enhanced offer to the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	<p>To consider and provide observations on the new service delivery model that will :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Create a single shared and sustainable Archive Service with Denbighshire County Councilii. Provide a 'state of the art' Archive building, co-located with Theatr Clwyd, with an extensive digital archive network across both counties and an innovative public engagement and support programme.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE DENBIGHSHIRE AND FLINTSHIRE JOINT ARCHIVE PROJECT
1.01	<p>Both Flintshire and Denbighshire County Councils are facing significant challenges in the accommodation where their archive collections are currently housed. There is a lack of sufficient and suitable storage facilities that meet statutory industry accreditation standards – Flintshire has already run out of storage space and Denbighshire will in the near future. This means that neither current facility can meet future demand. There are also issues for both archive services in how their resources are made accessible and relevant to their local communities.</p> <p>This project aims to provide a sustainable and improved archive service for Denbighshire & Flintshire via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. the creation of a single shared service.ii. the construction of a new purpose built Passivhaus building adjacent to Theatr Clwyd, Mold, to house both the physical archives and the new service operationsiii. an associated 3-year activity plan which will deliver a revolutionary and radical archive offer to the public. <p>It is proposed element (i) will be delivered even if element (ii) and (iii) are not.</p> <p>Elements (ii) and (iii) are dependent on National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding, topped up with capital investment by both Councils.</p>
1.02	<p>The project is being developed in collaboration with Denbighshire County Council (DCC) and a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by both Councils.</p>
1.03	<p>Both Flintshire and Denbighshire Councils have rich archive collections in both Welsh and English which tell the stories of local individuals, communities, families, estates, businesses, local government and churches spreading over 900 years. These materials reflect local, regional and national history and identity.</p>

1.04	<p>Both services currently have a narrow user base and low public profile with little capacity to change. They occupy old listed buildings, unfit for purpose, expensive to maintain and with little scope for adaptation. They are intimidating, provide poor disabled access, lack suitable public facilities or spaces, have storage deficiencies and insufficient space to accept new collections. In these times of public service austerity, archive services in both councils are at risk of financial inefficiency, poor workforce resilience and long term sustainability. This can only be addressed through a radical approach and the development of a different delivery model.</p>
1.05	<p>Merging Flintshire and Denbighshire's archive services will bring economies of scale, enhance the workforce by sharing skills and experience and pool resources, resulting in a more flexible, sustainable and resilient model that is better able to adapt and deliver a more meaningful and modern service to the wider community. Both Councils have a strong track record in successful partnership working.</p>
1.06	<p>An options appraisal to identify a suitable site for a new archive building considered several sites across both Flintshire and Denbighshire. The land adjacent to Theatr Clwyd was considered to be the most suitable site because of its potential to develop a unique cultural hub that combines the historically important collections of both counties alongside a creative partner who has significant skills and experience in engaging audiences.</p> <p>Members will be aware that it is anticipated that the theatre will also be a beneficiary of major investment to update its facilities and while the archive project is further behind in its development, the two projects can be managed successfully alongside each other if the funding is secured for both. This will also then compliment the development of the masterplan for the whole of the County Hall campus.</p> <p>This co-location provides a unique opportunity for the development of an archive offer that enables the best use of the rich historical collections in innovative ways to not just meet the needs of traditional archive users but to expand its reach to those who may not ever have considered what archive materials can offer them. Local market research has shown that there are gaps in the users of archive services e.g. children and young people, people with mental ill health, people with dementia, LGBT+ groups, low income groups, prisoners and probationers.</p> <p>Supporting all aspects of our local communities is a key requirement of all public service bodies and these plans for a new archive service have the potential to make a significant impact on our contribution to the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.</p>
1.07	<p>Extensive research into the potential construction method for a new building has concluded that a 'Passivhaus' approach is the most cost and energy efficient and ideally suited to an archive facility which needs temperature and environmentally controlled spaces to preserve delicate historical materials.</p> <p>The building will be designed to include state of the art storage facilities, a conservation studio, a digital lab, research rooms for quiet researchers and</p>

	<p>noisy explorers, open access/local history spaces, exhibition spaces, and spaces for learning and creative activities. Co-location with the theatre also enables access to quality refreshment facilities, outdoor public spaces and so helps to reduce costs. It also provides income generation opportunities for the theatre during the daytime when their customer base is usually lower.</p>
1.08	<p>The new building, if achieved, is only part of the revised customer offer for archive services. It is envisaged that the new building will act as the central hub for the archive service but that, through the use of digital technology and a carefully planned outreach programme, there will be many 'spokes' emanating out from the hub, reaching out in to the major towns and settlements of Flintshire and Denbighshire making archive materials more accessible to individuals and communities.</p>
1.09	<p>A joint project group was established of senior Council officers and Cabinet Members from both Flintshire and Denbighshire to develop a combined service model and a solution to the accommodation challenges facing both archives. Welsh Government provided some expert consultancy through their Museums and Library Division to this group.</p> <p>The potential for a new facility delivering an innovative, ambitious and unique archive offer to the public through its co-location with Theatre Clwyd has attracted the attention of the National Lottery Heritage Fund who have invited us to make a formal expression of interest to their national Heritage Horizons Grant Fund. If successful, the grant funding would provide 70% of the funding needed to construct a new archive building and develop the public offer.</p>
1.10	<p>Key milestones in the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2019 - Expression of interest submitted to NLHF • November 2019 – Decision on expression of interest to be received and possible invitation to move to next bidding stage. • December 2019 – Possible Stage 1 bid to NLHF • December 2019 – Appointment of Temporary Joint Service Manager for the Archives • April 2020 - Launch of Single Shared Service for Archive • September 2020 – Possible Stage 2 bid to NLHF • December 2020 – Final decision on outcome of funding bid <p>If the funding bid is successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January to August 2021 - Development Phase of project • December 2021 to January 2024 - Delivery Phase of Construction Project • 2022 to 2024 - Delivery of 3-year activity plan to develop and expand Archive Services
1.11	<p>The benefits to Flintshire County Council and its residents through this large scale project will be significant and secure archive services for many years to come by delivering:</p>

- i. A new archive service and bespoke building (c.3000m²), delivering a service “hub” in a new building adjacent to Theatr Clwyd in Mold and “spoke” service delivery through a mix of permanent and temporary community outreach provision.
- ii. Permanent outreach provision of Archive Services within the 6 libraries across Flintshire. (See Appendix A for a visual of Archive locations currently compared to post project state across Flintshire). These Archive library points provide a service 6 days a week across the County compared to the current service’s 4 days a week opening in one location. An injection of funds via the NLHF Activity Plan will revolutionise our purpose and reach by taking collections and services directly into Flintshire communities e.g. schools, community centres and care homes, leveraging new partnerships and digital technologies. This will enable the service to diversify its visitor base, increasing the number of volunteers, increasing its digitalisation and outreach and in doing so future proofs the services relevance now and in the future.
- iii. The delivery of an accommodation solution to the issue of no more repository space in the Old Rectory and cost avoidance of having to increase our use of commercial storage annually and the one off cost in relation to cost of upgrading the Environmental Management equipment at The Old Rectory which comes to the end of its life at various points over next 25 years. It also meets the cost of ensuring 100% of storage space meets PD5454 standards (currently at 88%), the cost of converting more of the current building to BS compliant archive storage and the cost of upgrading public facilities to an acceptable standard. The building at Mold will be future proofed in terms of repository size and 80% cheaper to run due to its Passivhaus design providing a simplified and lower carbon solution to deliver strict environmental condition standards.
- iv. A higher quality facility archive building within which national treasures relating to Flintshire can be conserved and showcased via specialised and secure exhibition space e.g The Mold Cape, currently held in The National Museum in London.
- v. A flexible and learning focused archive building based in Mold within which Flintshire schools, higher education colleges, children and adult services and volunteers can receive bespoke outreach activities to deliver outcomes in education, skills, wellbeing and mental health.
- vi. A state-of-the-art conservation suite in the new building ensuring Flintshire’s collections of local, regional and national significance are conserved alongside a purpose built repository of BSI and Accreditation standard, ensuring we discharge our statutory duties effectively.
- vii. The ability for Flintshire to access additional expert workforce resources through the joint service arrangement which will bring four more members of staff from Denbighshire into the joint service team. This additional resource brings an expertise in digitalising

	<p>archives, currently limited in Flintshire. This will enable us to deliver on our statutory duty as well as our ambitions for increased digitalisation and outreach. In addition, more staff provides the ability to increase opening hours at the new archive centre</p> <p>viii. Co-location of the new building with Theatr Clwyd will maximise the opportunity to support both buildings' business models e.g. the increased use of café/restaurant/bar within Theatr Clwyd during day time hours by archive users and for the use of additional flexible spaces within the theatre for archive related events/activities. Users of the theatre will be encouraged to engage with Archive services. Architectural designs which may enable the 'linkage' of the two buildings could reduce the need to replicate some facilities and reduce building costs within the archive project.</p> <p>ix. Co-location and joint working with the theatre, which also has its own community outreach programme would provide exciting opportunities to develop a joint programme, maximising the skills and expertise of both organisations and the use of artefacts & historical documents to engage the public.</p>
1.12	<p>Whilst we are hopeful that we will receive a positive response to our National Lottery Heritage Fund bid, both Councils are committed to developing a single archive service from April 2020 as this is the only way to ensure resilience and sustainability. Work to develop a suitable service model is well underway with positive engagement from both service teams and appropriate support and advice from Human Resource and Legal services within both Councils.</p>
1.13	<p>If the NLHF bid is unsuccessful, both Councils will have to revisit the accommodation issues to find an alternative solution that is affordable and maintains the integrity of the collections and enables the ongoing delivery of a public archive offer.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The estimated cost of delivering this project is £16,650,344. Of which FCC is being asked to contribute £3,027,782 (18%). The project will only go ahead if £11,588,041 (70%) NLHF Heritage Horizons grant monies is secured.</p>
2.02	<p>The total estimated figure of cost avoidance is £2,000 per annum from 2021/22 moving to £15,000 per annum (commercial storage, including retrieval) and one off cost of >£718,000 (avoiding need to replace end of life environmental management system and retrofitting existing spaces to meet environmental standard).</p>
2.03	<p>Impact on other services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Legal – support required in drawing up legal documentation relating to the creation of a single shared service. ii. HR- support required in creation of a single shared service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Finance – support to merge the two services into a single operating budget iv. Archive - engagement with the design process and working across 2 counties to continue to deliver the service during a period of transition v. Capital Assets – the requirement to consider alternative uses/dispose of the Old Rectory in Hawarden once vacated.
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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3.01	Reports have been presented to Informal Cabinet (November 2018), Capital and Assets Programme Board (July 2019) and Chief Officers Team (October 2019). Specific engagement has been undertaken with the local member for Hawarden where the Flintshire Records Office is currently located and will continue.
3.02	Externally the following key partners and stakeholders have been engaged with: Denbighshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council, Theatr Clwyd, The National Archive (TNA), The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), Gladstone’s Library, Friends of the Archive and local volunteer. A number of archives across the country have also been visited to learn from their experiences and provision e.g Hereford, Liverpool, Manchester, Beverley Treasure House and Hull History Centre.
3.03	<p>Consultation and engagement with our key funder NLHF, archive users and traditionally non users and activity plan delivery partners will be ongoing. So far the public have been engaged as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand and questionnaire at the Flint and Denbigh Show (08/ 2019) • Public Briefing and online questionnaire launched via social media (09/ 2019).

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	The top 5 risks for the project as outlined in Appendix B.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Current access points to Archive Service compared to number of access points created by the project.</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Top 5 risks for the project</p>
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Helen Vaughan-Evans, Project Manager Telephone: 01824 706204 E-mail: helen.vaughan-evans@denbighshire.gov.uk</p>
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Service delivery model – how the archive service will go about its business including how members of the public can access the service.</p> <p>Single Shared Archive Service – there will be 1 archive service covering Denbighshire and Flintshire together. At the minute there are 2 Archive Services- 1 covering just Denbighshire and 1 covering just Flintshire</p> <p>Hub and spoke service delivery model- this is how the archive service will go about its business and how members of the public can access the service. “Hub and spoke” is a turn of phrase using the imagery of a bike wheel. The hub (the centre of the wheel) will be the new archive centre in Mold and the spokes (the wires coming out from the centre of the wheel to the tyre) will be the digital access points within libraries and also the activity the service will deliver in communities (e.g. talks, workshops etc).</p> <p>Outreach- this is where the archive service is taken out to where the public are (e.g. in communities) instead of the public coming to where the archive service is (e.g. in Mold, Hawarden, Ruthin).</p>

