

## CABINET

28 June 2016

<b>Title:</b> Heritage Strategy 2016 - 2020	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Director:</b> John East, Strategic Director: Growth and Homes	
<b>Summary</b>  The purpose of the Heritage Strategy is to provide a shared vision for heritage development priorities to 2020 and a framework to enable them to be delivered.  There are two key strategic frameworks that have informed the development of this strategy – one internal (Ambition 2020, looking at how the Council works) and one independent (the Growth Commission, looking at the potential for economic growth).  This Strategy aims to build on previous success and recognises that Heritage Services has not yet reached its full potential. There is scope for Heritage Services to better contribute to community priorities through more effective promotion of the rich heritage of the Borough to both local people and visitors.  The vision for this strategy is for our heritage to be at the heart of the community, inspiring, creative, acknowledging and promoting the contribution of residents past and present in shaping the Borough and making a recognised positive contribution to improving the Borough and the lives of the people who live, work and visit it.  The strategy identifies eight key heritage focus areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Barking Abbey site</li><li>• Eastbury Manor House</li><li>• Valence House and its collections</li><li>• Maritime and fishing heritage</li><li>• Industrial heritage</li><li>• Becontree housing estate</li><li>• Oral, family and social history</li><li>• Old Dagenham Village and its church</li></ul>	

## **Recommendation(s)**

The Cabinet is recommended to adopt the Barking and Dagenham Heritage Strategy 2016 - 2020, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

## **Reasons**

To assist the Council in achieving its corporate priorities in relation to: Encouraging civic pride, Enabling social responsibility, and Growing the borough.

### **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Council's Heritage Service provides important benefits for Borough residents: engagement with heritage is associated with increases in wellbeing, improvements in health, improved educational and economic prospects, and higher levels of positive civic participation.
- 1.2 The previous Heritage Strategy ran from 2012 to 2015. Over its life there were significant improvements to heritage provision in the Borough.
- 1.3 This success is evidenced by the increased use of facilities and services. Also the quality and effectiveness of the facilities and services now provided has been widely recognised:
  - The Museums' Journal has described Valence House Museum as 'one of the best local history museums in London' and the web-site Londonist has called Eastbury Manor House one of the 'Top ten historic houses in London'.
  - The service secured the prestigious Sandford Award for the quality of the heritage education service provided to local schools, which puts the service on a par with national institutions like the Tower of London.
  - The Guardian included making a visit to Valence House Museum as one of the 50 best free things to do in London.
  - A Green Flag Award, the parks and open spaces industry standard for excellence, has been awarded to the gardens at Valence House.
  - Valence House Museum secured accreditation under the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS), the nationally recognised customer service excellence award for visitor attractions.
  - The service has also met the standards set out in the national Museums Accreditation scheme, which is a clear demonstration of the Council's commitment to managing the collections effectively for the enjoyment and benefit of users.
  - Earlier this year Valence House Museum won a Visit England Best Told Story award. The museum joins 61 other world class attractions, including the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, that have been recognised for going the extra mile and for the quality of the visitor experience.

## Strategic context

- 1.4 There are two key strategic frameworks that have informed the development of this strategy – one internal (**Ambition 2020**, looking at how the Council works) and one independent (the **Growth Commission**, looking at the potential for economic growth).
- 1.5 The **Ambition 2020** programme concluded that the Heritage Service should be retained in-house with a vigorous mission to promote the borough's past and its connection to the present and future. It proposes the implementation of an improvement programme to increase visitor numbers, income and volunteering whilst reducing operational costs.
- 1.6 The scope of the service will include – Valence House Museum (including Archives and Local Studies) and Eastbury Manor House – together with any new heritage assets that may be developed. It will continue to source external funding opportunities wherever possible. However there will be a concerted effort to drive up visitor numbers and maximise commercial opportunities.
- 1.7 **Ambition 2020** anticipates that better promotion of the heritage attractions in the borough will boost the borough's reputation as a worthwhile place to live and visit.
- 1.8 The **Growth Commission** report concluded that the borough: *has the potential and the political will to become an inclusive, prosperous and resilient place, in which all communities have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.*
- 1.9 The Commission recognised that there is a strong role for culture to play in the borough and that culture can contribute to socio-economic development and also helps support the creation and maintenance of social capital. It recommends that the Council should harness the potential of cultural activities to support the wider well-being agenda and as a way of creating a strong and positive vision of the area.
- 1.10 The report also identified the need for a 'One Borough' programme as a way of addressing divisiveness between different parts of the community and that the best way to do this is to intensify outreach to the community using a combination of heritage and cultural activities.
- 1.11 The new heritage strategy sets out how the Heritage Service will work to achieve the outcomes identified by **Ambition 2020** and the **Growth Commission**.

## 2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1 This Strategy aims to build on previous success and recognises that Heritage Services has not yet reached its full potential. There is scope for Heritage Services to better contribute to community priorities through better promotion of the rich heritage of the Borough to both local people and visitors.
- 2.2 The vision for this strategy is for our heritage to be at the heart of the community, inspiring, creative, acknowledging and promoting the contribution of residents past and present in shaping the Borough and making a recognised positive contribution to improving the Borough and the lives of the people who live, work and visit it.

2.3 The strategy identifies eight key heritage focus areas:

- The Barking Abbey site
- Eastbury Manor House
- Valence House and its collections
- Maritime and fishing heritage
- Industrial heritage
- Becontree housing estate
- Oral, family and social history
- Old Dagenham Village and its church

2.4 It is intended to provide a framework around which we will prioritise our efforts over the next four years to improve the quality of life of local people. In order to do this, nine priority action themes have been identified.

- Priority One: Buildings and gardens
- Priority Two: Collections
- Priority Three: Pride and promotion
- Priority Four: Inspirational learning
- Priority Five: More people visit
- Priority Six: More people engage
- Priority Seven: Building community capacity
- Priority Eight: Improving health and well-being
- Priority Nine: Financial sustainability

2.5 Section nine of the draft strategy sets out that it is expected that Council funding for heritage will reduce during the life of the strategy. This reality has directly shaped the development of the strategy and the accompanying improvement action plan.

2.6 A careful balancing act is required in this respect because there is a long term lease in place with the National Trust for the operation of Eastbury Manor House, which does not have a break clause, as well as long term funding agreements with the Heritage Lottery Fund in relation to their significant capital investment at both heritage sites. Also the archives and local studies centre has a duty under the Local Government Act 1972 (s224) to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council'.

2.7 The keystone of the strategy is the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness to deliver the same quality and range of services for less money, or to deliver more for the same level of expenditure. There will also be a continued focus over the life of the strategy to secure funding from other sources working in partnership with local, sub-regional and national agencies

2.8 The Heritage Service is adept at leveraging in external funding. Recent examples include:

- £140,000 from Arts Council England's Museums and Schools Programme to improve the quality and number of educational visits to the Valence House museum.
- £100,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund's transition funding pot to drive up income and usage at Eastbury Manor House.

- £65,000 from Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts scheme for the *50 years a Borough* project.
- A stage one Heritage Lottery Fund bid relating to the site of the former Barking Abbey is in development.

2.9 The draft version of the strategy and improvement action plan is attached at Appendix one.

### **3. Options Appraisal**

3.1 The options available to Cabinet are to approve the strategy and action plan (with any direction on amendments to be made) or to reject it.

3.2 Not to approve the strategy would mean that there is no strategic framework to drive improvements in the service, which would also impact on our ability to lever in external funding to support service delivery and capital developments.

3.3 Therefore, Cabinet is recommended to adopt the strategy and improvement action plan with any amendments, removals, or additions as they consider appropriate.

### **4. Consultation**

4.1 The strategy has been informed by the Ambition 2020 programme and the report of the Growth Commission as well as consultation with the Leader of the Council, stakeholders (including the Barking and Dagenham Cultural Partnership, Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage) and service users.

### **5. Financial implications**

Implications completed by Richard Tyler, Interim Group Finance Manager

5.1 The strategy set out in the report would be delivered using funding received from the Council's general fund and any other funding secured during the period covered by this strategy. Year on year the funding will be reviewed as this may fluctuate if cuts are required or if any of the grants cease. Any major variation in the funding may impact on the delivery of the strategy. Funding streams will be regularly reviewed to minimise this risk.

### **6. Legal implications**

Implications completed by Dr. Paul Feild, Senior Corporate Governance Solicitor

6.1 As set out in the report the Council will best develop and administer its heritage services through the means of a forward looking strategy reviewed on a timely and periodic basis to ensure it reflects local needs and the resources available to deliver it.

6.2 Where the strategy identifies a requirement for change in services particularly where there may be closure(s) or discontinuance of a service or services, appropriate consultation will need to be carried out. Any savings proposals that affect staff will require consultation with Unions and staff.

- 6.3 In addition, Members will need to be satisfied that Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out. In relation to the impact on different groups it should be noted that the Equality Act 2010 provides that a public authority must in the exercise of its functions have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who do and those who do not share a relevant 'protected characteristic'.
- 6.4 If at any point resort to constricting expenditure is required, it is important that due regard is given to statutory duties and responsibilities. In particular the Council must have regard to:
- any existing contractual obligations covering current service provision. Such contractual obligations where they exist must be fulfilled or varied with agreement of current providers;
  - any legitimate expectations that persons already receiving a service (due to be cut) may have to either continue to receive the service or to be consulted directly before the service is withdrawn;
  - any rights which statute may have conferred on individuals and as a result of which the council may be bound to continue its provision;
  - the impact on different groups affected by any changes to service provision as informed by relevant equality impact assessments;
  - having due regard to any consultation undertaken.

## 7. Other Issues

7.1 **Risk Management** - Accreditation and the collections framework documents, which form part of the strategy, are key risk management tools that will provide confidence that the collections in the care of the Council are being appropriately maintained and protected for future generations to enjoy.

7.2 **Customer Impact** - An equality impact assessment has been produced to inform the development of this strategy. It is expected that there will be a marked increase in the number and range of people who will be accessing heritage based facilities and activities in the Borough.

In particular, effort will be made over the life of the strategy to address under representation in current usage. Proposed actions include: the museums need to attract more men as service users (although there are good levels of participation for Local Studies and Archives); better targeted marketing of the museums to disabled people that emphasises the accessibility of the facilities; free events for families; and a more flexible and responsive education offer that will encourage more visits by children and young people.

7.3 **Safeguarding** - A clear focus for the strategy is to improve access to heritage by children and families and to support the delivery of the school curriculum. There will also be an extensive programme of positive and diversionary activities provided for young people.

All heritage facilities and services operate within the Culture and Recreation service's safeguarding policy framework for children and vulnerable adults.

- 7.4 **Health Issues** - The Borough's museums and archives have unique and as yet untapped potential to improve the health and well being of local people. The strategy proposes to develop more opportunities for people to come together to socialise and to take an active part in the community through volunteering.

There are also plans to develop specific heritage based projects for people with dementia and those suffering from depression.

- 7.5 **Crime and Disorder Issues** - The Council has a statutory duty to consider crime and disorder implications in all its decision making. In delivering this strategy and action plan, the Council will be providing quality facilities and activities, which will provide positive activities for all residents and, in particular, opportunities for families to enjoy their leisure time together.

#### **Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

The background papers used in the preparation of this report are set out in section 5 of the attached heritage strategy: links to other strategies and plans

#### **List of appendices:**

- **Appendix 1** – “Celebrating our past, Looking forward with pride”: A Heritage Strategy for Barking and Dagenham (2016 to 2020)