

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 July 2023

<b>Title:</b> Heritage Services Overview	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement</b>	
<b>Open Report with Appendix</b>	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> None	<b>Key Decision:</b> No
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<b>Accountable Strategic Leadership Director:</b> James Coulstock, Strategic Director of Inclusive Growth	
<b>Summary</b> <p>Barking and Dagenham is a vibrant and diverse Borough with a strong and evolving history we are proud of. As our local community grows and changes, we need to adapt our Heritage provision to meet the needs of everyone, and to ensure all local residents feel welcome across our cultural and local history sites. Eastbury Manor House (Barking), Valence House Museum and Archives (Dagenham) and the future Women’s Museum (Barking Wharf Square) each hold within them the potential to courageously celebrate the mix of identities, experiences and perspectives we represent through our diversity, and these sites are fertile platforms for fostering creativity and building understanding amongst local people. Despite ongoing financial pressures and setbacks that have plagued our sites (and the Heritage Service more widely) over the past decade, it is our vision to commission an aspirational and inspiring curatorial and public engagement programme where people learn about, respect and celebrate each other’s heritage.</p> <p>Keys areas of focus into the coming 3 years include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Solving historic and ongoing issues of chronic underfunding to our heritage sites which manifests as ongoing losses to Barking and Dagenham Council</li><li>- Creating resilient and solvent business models at our heritage sites which include new and improved income streams that are well networked with initiatives and priorities across the Borough</li><li>- Growing our Heritage Education provision to ensure all school children in the borough have access, and to build schools visits from outside the Borough</li><li>- Improving our commissioned projects, exhibitions and partnership opportunities to maximise the full potential of our Heritage provision across the borough and build visitor numbers</li><li>- Improving access (including digital and physical) and representation for local people across all Heritage facilities and platforms</li><li>- Managing and actioning urgent conservation works and repair issues across key heritage sites to meet our statutory responsibilities.</li></ul>	

## Recommendation(s)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (i) Note the planned trajectory for future Heritage provision in Barking and Dagenham across key sites, commissioning platforms and our Heritage Education programmes;
- (ii) Note the possibility that sites will be impacted by ongoing financial and budgetary pressures; and
- (iii) Note that significant fundraising will be required in the next 2-5 years to meet our statutory responsibilities for our listed heritage sites and the borough archives.

## Reason(s)

As outlined in our 2023-2026 Corporate Plan Priority 5 “*Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration*”, improving our heritage offer in the Borough will allow us to continue to positively transform communities and encourage local businesses to grow, supporting and attracting long term investment that benefits our residents. The National Trust has identified the Borough as a key area of development into the future, whilst Arts Council England has identified Barking and Dagenham as a priority for investment as part of its work to support skill development and future economic growth in the arts and heritage sectors.

## 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In September 2022, the Culture and Heritage Services were formally amalgamated and restructured to provide better strategic, financial and artistic leadership across our related programming strands and sites in the Borough. Since then, we have begun to re-set the priorities, policy and programming direction of our community-focused arts and heritage initiatives. Identified as a “Priority Place” by Arts Council England in 2022 and more recently as a key development area for the National Trust, our primary heritage sites across the Borough include Eastbury Manor House, Valence House Museum, the Women’s Museum (opening November/December 2023) and the Borough Archives. Additionally, the Service leads a vibrant Heritage Education programme which focuses on delivering local history provision for local schools across Barking and Dagenham.
- 1.2 What is clear across our heritage assets is we have both historic and ongoing financial issues which impact our ability to appropriately manage the sites, and to properly meet our statutory responsibilities in caring for these important listed buildings. For more than a decade there has been a chronic underfunding of the Heritage Service and this has manifested as: a skeleton staffing structure across Eastbury Manor House and Valence House Museum which limits site opening hours and opportunities to develop more community-focused programming; a long list of urgent conservation and building works which have not been dealt with over the past years and which are currently being fundraised for; and ongoing financial losses to Barking and Dagenham Council which can no longer be carried forward in the current difficult economic climate.

- 1.3 To meet these urgent needs and pressures it is important to prioritise: fundraising and new income generation opportunities across sites to bring in additional resource; grow our volunteer base which was depleted during Eastbury Manor House's years of closure and due to the impact of Covid-19 across both key heritage sites when local residents were unable to visit; and to develop new models of community and sector partnerships where we will be able to maximise resources and share in our custodianship of our heritage with the local community.

## 2. Background to Key Heritage Sites:

- 2.1 **Eastbury Manor House:** Eastbury Manor House is a Grade I listed Elizabethan gentry house set in historic gardens owned by the National Trust which is leased and operated by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The site reopened to the public in April 2023, following a long period of closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Currently the site is open 4 days a week: Wednesday – Friday 10am-4pm, and Sundays 11am-4pm.

The Culture and Heritage Service is in the process of strengthening its relationship to the National Trust to ensure better management and collaboration of the site is put in place following years of neglect and under resourcing which has impacted the ability of the site to function at a proficient level. The broader site requires extensive repair and conservation works to maintain an appropriate standard of custodianship to meet our statutory responsibilities and to improve the visitor experience (See Conservation Management Plan, Appendix 2). A new curatorial vision for Eastbury Manor House will explore both the site's historical and contemporary significance. With historic links of both national and international importance (including ties to the gunpowder plot, East India Company and centuries of farming practices), Eastbury's public programmes will include learning opportunities for adults, children and young people, exhibitions, research and collaboration with local and national communities. The new programme at Eastbury Manor House will address critical issues relevant to our residents including anti-racism, gender identity and the decolonisation of our heritage sites.

Key areas of focus we are developing in consultation with the National Trust include:

- Greater support for community-led programming and custodianship; further development of a volunteer base running from the site
- Activation and improvement of greenspaces and outdoor areas of Eastbury Manor House, networking these with broader LBB and NT initiatives (including Stoneford Cottage, Valence House Museum and other heritage/green spaces in Barking and Dagenham) to build a stronger focus on sustainability, growing spaces, environmental conservation, and wellbeing
- Support in addressing conservation issues and developing sustainable long-term financial and operational models to build greater resilience and profitability at the site

Key projects in the planning stages for 2023-25 financial years include:

- development of a community-led café at Eastbury Manor House, linked to heritage gardens onsite and broader growing spaces in the Borough; this project will evolve through input from LBBB Good Food Collective and other local food/growing based initiatives; development of the café will also be supported through LBBB's Food Sector Development work focused on ensuring local access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food
- development of a film-based programme, linked to curatorial initiatives outlined above and LBBB's *Made in Dagenham* programme, which could include Eastbury hosting: film-based workshops, community clubs, screenings and special events which tie to broader heritage education programmes in the Borough as well as the Borough's vibrant film industry
- From 2023 – 2027 a PhD studentship will be based at Eastbury Manor House, fully funded through the TECHNE programme and led in partnership with Kingston University's School of Art and Architecture. The purpose of the studentship will focus on development of community gardens within the site. Supervision for the PhD will be jointly shared by the Head of Service and the Senior Curator of Cultural Programmes.

**2.2 Valence House Museum:** Valence House Museum, Grade II\* (1954) was first registered as a museum in 1997. The museum is set within landscaped grounds that includes a herb garden, Second World War vegetable plot, traditional fruit orchard and apiary. The site, which also includes an accredited Local History Archives, a café and two education spaces, is surrounded by a medieval moat and situated within Valence Park on the Becontree Estate in Dagenham. Immediately adjacent to the site are Valence Primary School and Valence Library, a locally listed building designed as a civic space for the estate in the 1930's. The Museum and broader Valence Park site is well-loved and sits at the heart of the local community with an enormous amount of untapped potential.

Valence House Museum's core collection totals 20,000 objects, consisting of a range of artefacts which reflect the history and development of the community of Barking and Dagenham from Prehistory to the modern day. The museum holds archaeological finds of national significance from the local area. Currently the site is open 5 days a week: Tuesday – Saturday 10am-4pm.

The broader site requires extensive repair and conservation works to maintain an appropriate standard of custodianship to meet our statutory responsibilities and to improve the visitor experience of the site. Works deemed urgent following consultation with heritage specialist architects are as follows:

- 2020/21 condition surveys identified urgent repairs to the listed Manor House, which prioritise works to failing lime render and window repairs as being critical to address urgent degradation to the building fabric. Other urgent works are reparation to leaking roof in the visitor/education centre coupled with upgrading to building services namely, air control systems & sustainable energy supply, which will improve the thermal performance of the building

- Heritage landscaping of gardens (herb, kitchen & sensory), reparative works to the medieval moat & decontamination of the lake (currently closed to public)
- Provision of wider site interpretation, coupled with new wayfinding signage to promote greater understanding and engagement with the heritage fabric of the site
- Budgetary restrictions have compromised sustainable conservation & digital storage with c2k objects awaiting accession
- Condition survey of the Fanshawe collection (2021) identified urgent attention and greater preservation of the Glindoni Folio, a key asset in the Borough's collection
- Following a dedicated access survey, the site must adopt principles of inclusive design to rework main routes ensuring greater accessibility and connectivity of site, including Valence Library, Valence Primary School (Ramps, landscaping, wayfinding); wider heritage landscape and accessibility proposals are forming part of a master planning process that was commenced in early 2023

Our ambition for the broader site aims to exceed statutory minimums of accessibility, whilst also making us financially & environmentally efficient through reducing energy use, optimising green spaces & future proofing our heritage assets. This will increase visitor footfall whilst generating earned income through hires, secondary spend (café/shop) and new grant revenue potential for public programming. It will lay the groundwork to furthering our 2021 Conservation & Management Plan (Appendix 1). In creating a coherent cultural & learning hub we will prioritise access measures and remove barriers to build community and agency, particularly for 33 local schools, elderly residents, disabled and a greater diversity of visitors.

**2.3 Borough Archives and Local Study Centre:** Barking and Dagenham Archives and Local Studies Centre collects, preserves and performs our statutory duty to provide access to informational resources on the place and people of Barking and Dagenham. The archive collection comprises the minute books, departmental records and plans of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and its predecessor authorities dating back to 1558. The archive holds deposited papers, including correspondence, diaries, and printed ephemera, as well as oral histories, photographs, and films, relating to local organisations, businesses, schools, charities, families, and individuals with connections to Barking and Dagenham. The local studies collection is made up of printed books, periodicals, newspapers and maps. Urgent repairs are required to the current purpose-made building housing the Borough Archives, and a workplan to address this is being developed to address this as part of the wider Masterplan of the Valence House Museum and Park site.

**2.4 The Women's Museum:** This new heritage site for the Borough located at 4-5 Barking Wharf Square will be a satellite exhibition and community space led by LBBD Borough Archives and Valence House Museum local history collection. Funded through SCIL (formerly granted to the East End Women's Museum), the Museum will platform the history and stories of both local women and their sisters beyond, and is being developed as an inclusive space open to all, including those identifying as transgender, intersex, non-binary, male and female. The Women's Museum will

showcase exhibitions, projects, events and workshops which platform the enormous historic achievements of women, whilst also providing a contemporary space for dialogue and gathering to consider critical issues pertinent to our collective contemporary experiences. Our inaugural exhibition focusing on the history of the Abbesses of Barking Abbey is being developed in partnership with a number of local and sector-related partners, and will open in late November 2023.

Ongoing fundraising is urgently required to create a resilient budget to staff and resource the ongoing programme and overheads for the site. Currently there is no dedicated budget for the running or programming of this new heritage space, with funds currently being drawn from other Culture Commissioning strands and resulting in reduced cultural activity across the Borough. Currently exploring grant funding and sponsorship possibilities, which would secure a baseline financial model to cover overheads for the Museum ensuring long-term viability of the space into the future.

### **3. Proposal and Issues**

3.1 Our deliverables and strategic priorities over the coming years 2023-2026 include:

- Community-led programming and custodianship platforming the rich cultural heritage and contemporary cultural landscape of Barking and Dagenham
- Supporting delivery of aspirations for the upcoming new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which embodies a vision of “working together to give the best chance in life to babies, children, young people and their families”
- Increasing number of participants across initiatives and heritage sites by 10% annually 2023-2026
- Vibrant commissioning models, participatory frameworks and programmes representing diversity of the Borough, and supporting local organisations including: The White House, Company Drinks, BDYD, Greenshoes Arts
- Activating greenspaces and outdoor areas of Eastbury Manor House and Valence House Museum, networking these with broader LBBB and National Trust initiatives to build a stronger focus on sustainability, growing spaces, environmental conservation, and wellbeing
- Greater access to digital facilities across the Borough meeting needs of residents
- Establishment of culture and heritage sites in the Borough as young people’s safe-spaces in collaboration with LBBB Children’s Social Care and our Cultural Education Partnership, local schools, and cultural organisations, allowing young constituents living in the Borough free and unquestioned access to the Centre at designated after-school hours throughout the year
- Engagement programmes to connect residents with new spaces like the Women’s Museum in Barking Wharf Square

3.2 The significant key issues which may prevent us from achieving our aims include:

- A lack of financial resilience and insufficient core budgets at our heritage sites; the new Women's Museum space currently has no formal budget allocation at all
- A deficiency in meeting our statutory requirements due to neglect and a lack of funds, including addressing urgent conservation issues at our two key listed sites.

#### **4. Options Appraisal / Actions to be taken forward:**

- 4.1 Urgent fundraising exercises are currently underway to meet the consider financial gaps in Heritage budgets which prevent both Valence House Museum and Eastbury Manor House from being solvent. To move forward in effectively running our heritage sites and the future Women's Museum, we require an addition £200,000 - £300,000 GBP annually to be either redirected from other budgets to the sites, or to be sought through grants.
- 4.2 Additional fundraising is required to meet our statutory responsibilities around custodianship and conservation of our heritage buildings. Following the Masterplan development for Valence House Museum and consultation with the National Trust around our maintenance responsibilities for Eastbury Manor House, we expect fundraising targets to exceed 2.3 million GBP to meet our basic requirements; this target will rise considerably as we undertake a full redesign of the Valence Park and Valence Library site.

#### **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 As part of the Masterplan exercise at Valence House Museum, a resident and community consultation recently concluded on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023. This was undertaken to gain valuable insight from local people around their key priorities and views of the heritage site and broader park area. We are currently distilling data from over 400 residents who have contributed their views. Further consultation will take place with Members, Officers, and key stakeholders throughout the Masterplan process.
- 5.2 Ongoing consultation in relation to the future Women's Museum site is taking place both with residents, schools, and key stakeholders both in the Borough and across the sector.

#### **6. Implications**

As this report is not for decision, there are no direct legal or financial implications arising from it.

- 6.1 **Risk Management** – The Culture and Heritage Service will respond to and prioritise key recommendations from Conservation Managements plans and Quinquennial inspections for Eastbury Manor House and Valence House Museum to ensure we fulfil our statutory responsibilities to listed heritage sites under our custodianship.

6.2 **Contractual Issues** – In 2021 specialist heritage-focused Project Managers Greenwood Project were appointed to lead management of repair and conservation works at Valence House Museum. With LBBB’s Heritage Commissioner they are overseeing the Masterplan development work for the site with heritage consultants Caroe Architecture, who tendered and won the contract for this work in 2021/2022 through LBBB’s procurement process.

6.3 **Staffing Issues** – As we consider improvements to management of our heritage sites, any changes to staff schedules which may result in a reduction of hours will be consulted upon with staff and Trade Unions, with all relevant LBBB HR processes being followed.

#### 6.4 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact**

The Culture and Heritage Service has developed an equal opportunities statement designed to implement the commitment of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to equal opportunities and dignity at work. It is the responsibility of every employee, working on or off site, to ensure their own conduct conforms to the expected standards reflected in this statement. The aim of the statement is to encourage dignity, equality and respect amongst individuals as outlined in our 2023-2026 Corporate Plan, and to promote good working practices across culture and heritage programmes, with a view to maximising inclusion of residents and visitors at our borough-operated Culture and Heritage sites and across all related programming and commissioning streams.

We are doing this by:

- **Communication:** We are working to ensure all our communications are more inclusive and reach a greater diversity of residents and visitors to our sites, making it easier for people to share their views and to increase their participation in the arts, heritage, and culture around them
- **Improving access for people of all ages and abilities:** We are working on installing ramps, accessibility devices and investing in improved pathways, sensory spaces, and signage at the places we care for
- **Free and safe access:** We will be increasing awareness of the free access to our sites and programmes, particularly focusing on improving access to the community during after school hours and at weekends, removing - wherever possible - any social or economic barriers which prevent local people from experiencing arts, culture and heritage
- **Increasing access to our greenspaces:** We are working with our Park Rangers, local partners and other national organisations to help everyone access and enjoy the outdoors

6.5 **Safeguarding Adults and Children/ Health Issues** - Through our work across the Culture and Heritage Service, we are supporting delivery of aspirations for the new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which embodies a vision of “working together to give the best chance in life to babies, children, young people and their families”.



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

None.

**List of appendices:**

- Appendix 1 [Conservation Management Plan for Valence House Museum and surrounding area](#)
- Appendix 2 [Conservation Management Plan for Eastbury Manor House](#)
- Appendix 3 [Quinquennial Inspection Report 2020](#)
- Appendix 4 Culture and Heritage Service Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement (draft)