Summary of the collections policy framework

1.0 Museum Collections Development Policy

1.1 Valence House Museum’s statement of purpose is:

Valence House exists to inspire learning and pride by collecting, preserving and engaging people with the heritage of Barking and Dagenham.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, Valence House Museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum’s collection:

1.4 Criteria to be used when identifying items for potential disposal:

- The items are no longer relevant to the Museum’s mission and are unlikely to have future potential for display or research
- They are considered more relevant to the collection of another museum or heritage body
- The Museum is unable to provide adequate care for the items
- The items are too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use or future use for the purposes of the Museum
- They are items which pose a health and safety risk, where disposal is required to comply with relevant legislation or to remove the risk to staff from these items.
- Duplicate items (after consideration of an item’s provenance and research value as well as physical duplication)
- They are replica, exhibition or prop items which should have never been accessioned

1.5 Therefore one of the recommendations of this report is that the Council will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons. Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.6 Valence House Museum recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using SPECTRUM (a collections management standard) primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.7 Valence House Museum will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen
unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

2.0 Museum Documentation Policy

2.1 Documentation is a core function of collections management, and it is inextricably linked with a vast array of other core activities. The information held by Heritage Services about its collections is at least as valuable as the collections themselves and documentation and information retrieval consequently takes a high priority.

2.2 Our policy for documentation of the collections is to ensure that the information we hold relating to the collections is accurate, secure, reliable and accessible.

3.0 Museum Care and Conservation Policy

3.1 The purpose of the Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework for:

- The preservation of the collections and buildings in the care of the museum
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections
- The safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of the museum’s resources

4.0 Museum Access Policy

4.1 This document sets out the policy of Valence House Museum on its physical and intellectual access provision for all visitors and staff. The policy operates alongside, and should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Care and Conservation Policy
- Collection Development Policy
- Documentation Policy

4.2 The guidelines outlined in this policy are informed by and work in conjunction with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council’s Single Equality Scheme 2013-2016.

4.3 In line with the Museum Accreditation Scheme, this policy details how the Valence House Museum will:

- improve accountability for collections and collections information.
- maintain at least minimum professional standards in documentation, collections information and access to collections.
- extend access to collections and collections information including facilitating physical, sensory and intellectual access on site and virtually, and by lending and borrowing.
- strengthen the security of the collections through accurate collections information.

5.0 Archive Collection Development Policy

5.1 The purpose of the archive collection development policy is to:
- Outline the mission, vision and objectives of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Archives & Local Studies Centre (hereafter referred to as LBBD Archive).
- Ensure that the archive and local studies collections accurately reflect the history of the local authority, community and people of Barking and Dagenham.
- Ensure that the archive and local studies collections are managed effectively, and remain relevant and engaging for current, as well as future generations of researchers that visit LBBD Archive.
- Establish consistency when dealing with internal and external deposits, as well as the proper disposal of archive and local studies material at LBBD Archive.

6.0 Archive Appraisal Policy

6.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the principles and practices that guide the selection and disposal of collections held by the Barking and Dagenham Archives & Local Studies Centre (hereafter referred to as LBBD Archive).

6.2 LBBD Archive exists to collect, preserve and make available records relating to the rich history and rapidly changing present of Barking and Dagenham.

6.3 The process of selecting records of the highest archival value and removing any material that is duplicate, ephemeral or low informational value allows us to maximise storage space for archive collections of permanent historical value.

6.4 Appraisal is also necessary to maintain control over the proliferation of records that are created in the digital age, and to ensure that only the items most useful and relevant to research are retained.

6.5 The recording of information about appraisal, and especially disposal decisions is of vital importance following the passing of the Freedom of Information Act in 2000. The Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the Management of Records, issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act states ‘authorities need to have in place systems for managing appraisal and for recording the disposal decisions made’.

6.6 This policy has been developed in accordance with existing appraisal policies produced by other repositories, namely The National Archives Appraisal and London Metropolitan Archives.

6.7 The aims of this appraisal policy are as follows:

- To ensure that records selected for permanent preservations are of the highest archival value.
- To develop rational, consistent and cost effective appraisal methodology for records created by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and held at LBBD Archive.
- To provide rational and consistent decisions, valid over time, for all records of potential archival value produced by organisations and individuals whose collections are held at LBBD Archive.
- To destroy material that is duplicate, ephemeral or of low informational value confidentially, if not wanted by the original owner or depositor.
• To be aware of usage and potential future research trends and to assess these needs alongside our Collection Development Policy.
• To assess risk in all circumstances and make all appraisal decisions based on full analysis of available information.

7.0 Archive Preservation Policy

7.1 The purpose of this preservation policy is to outline the principles that guide the preservation and care of the collections held at the Barking and Dagenham Archives and Local Studies Centre.

7.2 LBBD Archive has a fundamental responsibility to ensure the continuing availability and authenticity of the records that it holds for present and future generations under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972

7.3 The records that we hold have informational, material and cultural value. The preservation of the archive and local studies collections is vital in order to safeguard the authenticity of records, whilst also ensuring that records can be accessed by current, as well as future users at LBBD Archive.

7.4 LBBD Archive adopts an evidence based approach when striving to preserve its collections.

7.5 LBBD Archive complies with national and international preservation standards. This policy has been developed in accordance with these standards, as well as existing preservation policies used by other repositories, namely The National Archives and London Metropolitan Archive

7.6 The aims of this policy are as follows:

• To ensure the preservation of archive holdings for current and future access at the Barking and Dagenham Archives & Local Studies Centre.
• To ensure that preservation is embedded in all activities, from acquisition through to access at LBBD Archive.
• To raise awareness among staff, users and others on preservation matters that relate to the care of collections at LBBD Archive
• To advise staff, users and others on preservation matters that relate to the care of collections at LBBD Archive.
• To guide the development preservation strategy, procedures and guides consistent with the values and goals of LBBD Archive.

8.0 Archives Access Policy

8.1 The purpose of this access policy is to outline the principles and practices that guide the provision of access to the collections held by the Barking and Dagenham Archives & Local Studies Centre.

8.2 LBBD Archive has a fundamental responsibility to provide access to its collections under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972
Moreover it is a statutory right for citizens to be able to access information, subject to certain exemptions and conditions as outlined by the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Public Services Quality Group Standard for Access to Archives, as well as existing access policies used by other repositories, namely London Metropolitan Archives.

The aims of this access policy are as follows:

- To make the archive and local studies collections available to the widest possible audience to promote an understanding of and pride in the heritage of Barking and Dagenham.
- To ensure that information about the collections is effectively collected, maintained and safeguarded.
- To ensure that access to the collections takes place in a safe, secure and comfortable environment.
- To employ effectively new technologies to deliver remote access to our holdings.
- To provide an enquiry service, which is responsive to, and meets the needs of current, as well as potential future users.
- To raise awareness of the relevance and significance of the collections both now and in the future.
- To guide the development of access procedures and guidelines consistent with the value and goals of LBBD Archive.