Title: Policy Framework for the Council’s Heritage Collection

Report of the Leader of the Council

Open Report

Wards Affected: All

Key Decision: Yes

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Summary:

Valence House Museum’s accreditation with the National Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom is due for renewal this year. Accreditation ensures standards of collection care are maintained and the Council fulfils its statutory duty in maintaining borough archives. Accreditation also opens up valuable funding opportunities, which would not otherwise be available to the Council.

The Archives and Local Studies Centre is also applying for accreditation for the first time with the new Archive Service Accreditation run by The National Archives.

As the governing body for Valence House Museum and the Archives and Local Studies Centre, the Council is required to approve the collections policy documents to be submitted for accreditation.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is asked to:

(i) Approve the accreditation framework of policies for Valence House Museum and the Archives and Local Studies Centre as set out in the report and Appendices 1 - 9; and

(ii) Note that the Council will be making an undertaking not to dispose of any item in the museum collection for primarily financial reasons.

Reason(s)

Maintaining accreditation for Valence House Museum and achieving archive accreditation for the Archives & Local Studies Centre will enable the Heritage Services to continue to lever in external funding and to ensure that measures are put in place to ensure that the
collections in our care are looked after effectively so that future generations can enjoy, appreciate and learn from them.

The Council’s heritage service generates 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.

Achieving accreditation will support Heritage services in contributing to the achievement of the following Council priorities:

- **Encouraging civic pride**: Build pride, respect and cohesion across our borough; narrow the gap in attainment and realise high aspirations for every child; Build civic responsibility and help residents shape their quality of life.
- **Enabling social responsibility**: Ensure children and young people are well-educated and realise their potential.
- **Growing the borough**: Support investment in housing, leisure, the creative industries and public spaces to enhance our environment.
- **A well run organisation**: Manage finances efficiently, looking for ways to make savings, generate income and be innovative in service delivery.

### 1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Valence House is a fully accredited museum in the National Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom administered by the Arts Council England. Museums taking part in the scheme are periodically required to provide evidence that they continue to comply with the Accreditation Standard through a returns process. Valence House Museum has been asked to make a return by the end of August 2015.

1.2 Archive Service Accreditation is a new scheme which replaces the Local Authority Self Assessment Scheme, which the Borough’s Archives and Local Studies Centre previously took part in.

1.3 Further information on both accreditation schemes is set out below.

#### Museum Accreditation Scheme

1.4 The Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. There are currently about 1,800 museums participating in the scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment and benefit of users.

1.5 The scheme is regarded by the museum sector as one of the most innovative and effective developments in raising museum standards in the UK. It is administered by Arts Council England.

1.6 Accreditation has recently been developed to keep pace with the times, to help museums develop their resilience through effective forward planning, to balance aspects of collection management and to encourage all museums to be responsive to user needs and expectations.
Accreditation enables museums and governing bodies to assess their current performance, and it supports them in planning and developing their services. In particular it helps with:

- **Performance** - It is a quality standard that serves as an authoritative benchmark for assessing performance, rewarding achievement and driving improvement.
- **Profile** - It raises awareness and understanding of museums, building confidence and credibility both within the governing body and among the public.
- **People** - It helps museums to improve their focus on meeting users' needs and interests and developing their workforce.
- **Partnerships** - It helps museums to examine their services and to encourage joint working within and between organisations.
- **Planning** - It helps with forward planning by formalising procedures and policies.
- **Patronage** - It demonstrates that a museum has met a national standard, which strengthens applications for public and private funding and gives investors confidence in the organisation.

### Archive Accreditation

1.8 Archive Service Accreditation is the new UK wide standard for the archives sector. Accredited archive services will be able to evidence that they provide a high level of service to their users, preserve their collections in line with national standards and are robust, sustainable services which plan and deliver ongoing improvement.

1.9 Archive Service Accreditation:

- is a UK wide quality standard which offers a benchmark for gauging performance, recognising achievement and driving improvement with the archives sector;
- raises the profile of archive services by building confidence and credibility both within the parent organisations and externally, through increased awareness and understanding;
- helps archive services adapt and respond to user needs and interests, and develop their workforce;
- encourages partnership working within and between organisations, by helping archive services to examine how best to deliver their services;
- provides a robust framework for forward planning to improve procedures and policy and reduce organisational risk;
- is a badge of external recognition which demonstrates quality services;
- encourages professionalism in the archives sector.

### Proposal and issues

#### Proposal

2.1 This report recommends that Cabinet approves the adoption of a suite of policy documents that will allow the heritage service to achieve museum and archives accreditation:

- Museum Collections Development Policy
2.2 A short summary of each of these policy documents is attached at Appendix one with the full version of each policy document attached at Appendices two to nine.

Financial and operational issues

2.3 Accredited status for the Valence House Museum has enabled the heritage service to access funding and other support that would not otherwise be available. Examples include Museums Survive and Thrive programme (£11,600), and the Museums and Schools programme (£173,430). It has also contributed to successful funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund for capital funding (c£3.5 million) and revenue funding (£100,000 transition grant and £65,000 for the 50 years a Borough project).

2.4 If the collections policy documents are not approved, and therefore accreditation is not achieved, then many funding streams would not be accessible, which would put at risk the development of the service and the ability to deliver services and outcomes that contribute to fulfilling the Council’s priorities.

2.5 If accreditation is not achieved there are implications for the operation of the Museum and Archives and Local Studies Service. There is a real risk that confidence by the public and other institutions in the service will be reduced, which would affect the donation and acquisition of items for the collections and loans of items from other institutions for displays and exhibitions, including potentially the Dagenham Idol, which is the centrepiece of the local history collection on display at Valence House Museum.

2.6 Accreditation helps maintain and drive forward standards, without it there is a risk that standards and the development of the Museum and Archives and Local Studies will stall which will impact on the care of the collections, to services provided to the public and the contribution to the Council’s priorities.

2.7 The reputation of the service and would also be at risk without accreditation affecting promotional campaigns, partnership working and the engagement of the community with their heritage.

3. Options Appraisal

3.1 There are considered to be four options available to Members:

Option 1  Not to secure accreditation for Valence House Museum and the Archives and Local Studies Centre.

Option 2  Secure accreditation for Valence House Museum and the Archives and Local Studies Centre – this is the preferred option.
Option 3 Only secure accreditation for Valence House Museum

Option 4 Only secure accreditation for the Archives and Local Studies Centre.

3.2 Option 1 - Not to renew Valence House Museum’s accreditation with the National Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom and not to apply for Archive Service Accreditation run by The National Archives.

3.2.1 The only perceived advantage of this option is the officer time saved in not making the applications.

3.2.2 The disadvantages are set out above in 2.4 to 2.7 but can be summarised as follows:

- Heritage service would not be able to access external funding streams which would have an adverse impact on the development of the service and delivery of outcomes that contribute to the Council’s priorities.
- There would be a risk that the public and key organisations would lose confidence in the service which would have an adverse impact on the service’s ability to acquire and loan items.
- There is a risk that the existing robust standards of care of the collections would be reduced over time, which would impact on the service’s ability to protect the collections so that they can be enjoyed by future generations.

3.2.3 This option was rejected.

3.3 Option 2 - Renew Valence House Museum’s accreditation with the National Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom and apply for Archive Service Accreditation run by The National Archives.

3.3.1 The advantages of this option are set out in 1.7 and 1.9 and can be summarised as follows:

- It will enable access to funding streams
- It will improve performance and raises standards
- It will raise the profile of the service
- It helps focus on user needs and interest
- It encourages partnership working and helps with long term planning

3.3.2 The disadvantage of this option is the commitment of officer time in making the applications.

3.3.3 This is the preferred option.

3.4 Option 3 - Renew Museum Accreditation but not to apply for Archives Accreditation. The advantages summarised above in 3.5 apply but only to the Museum. The disadvantage of this option is that the collections, policies and management of both museum and archive collections are interlinked and much of the work required for Museum Accreditation applies to Archives Accreditation too. It makes little sense to apply only for Museum Accreditation when much of the work for Archives accreditation would already be completed and so this option was rejected.
3.5 Option 4 is to apply for Archives Accreditation but not renew Museum Accreditation. Again the advantages summarised above in 3.5 apply but only to the archives. The disadvantages and advantages for this option are the same as for option 3.

4. Consultation

4.1 Maintaining Museum Accreditation and achieving Archive Accreditation is a focus area under Priority One: Collections in the Heritage Strategy for Barking and Dagenham 2013-2016 ‘Celebrating Our Past, Looking Forward with Pride’ which included consultation with various groups including staff, volunteers and Friends of the Museums.

4.2 There were also presentations about the strategy to a pre-Assembly meeting of Members and the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee. The Strategy was approved by Cabinet.

5 Financial implications

Implications completed by Carl Tomlinson, Finance Group Manager

5.1 The cost of preparing the policy documents was £1,000 and funded within existing budgets. Accredited status has enabled Valence House Museum to benefit from external grant funding in periods of funding restraint. Renewing the accredited status and a new Archive Service Accreditation should support access to funding streams going forward.

5.2 Agreeing the attached policies includes undertaking not to dispose of any item in the museum collection for primarily financial reasons.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by Daniel Toohey, Principal Corporate Solicitor

6.1 There are no legal implications for this report. The applicable legislation is set out in the attached appendices.

7. Other Implications

7.1 Risk Management - Accreditation and the collections framework documents 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.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- Appendix 1 Summary of collections policy framework
- Appendix 2 Museum Collections Development Policy
- Appendix 3 Museum Documentation Policy