

## CABINET

19 February 2024

<b>Title:</b> Valence House Museum and Borough Archive Conservation project	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> Valence	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Executive Team 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 to be proud of. As the local community grows and changes, the Council needs to adapt and improve its Heritage provision to meet the needs of everyone, and to ensure all local residents feel welcome across cultural and local history sites. Valence House Museum and Archives, located in the heart of the Becontree Estate in Dagenham, has the potential to courageously celebrate the mix of identities, experiences and perspectives we represent through our diversity.</p> <p>Significant fundraising has been undertaken by the Culture and Heritage Service to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities for the listed heritage site and the adjacent Borough Archives. As part of this, the Council has been successful in its application to the Arts Council of England's (ACE) Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND) for funding towards urgent capital and conservation works related to the site.</p> <p>In total the Council has awarded a capital investment of £811,250 (Reference: MEND-00559411-R2 Restricted Funds), plus an additional £70,000 smaller grant from Arts Council England towards the works. These grants are based on the terms and conditions and delivery of the Agreed Capital Project Plan as set out in the Deed of Covenant between the two parties, The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and The Arts Council England. The project carries a partnership funding percentage of 20% that the Culture and Heritage Service has met through earmarked UK Shared Prosperity funds (£150,000) and ringfenced capital funds from Parks Commissioning for conservations works to the North Moat (£175,000).</p> <p>This funding allows the Council to focus on key improvements to buildings and grounds at Valence House including (but not limited to): improved infrastructure and access provision, greater financial resilience, increased environmental performance to support the reduction in carbon emissions, amongst other benefit. The impacts and outcomes align with the deliverables as set out by the Arts Council England MEND funding and align with the Council's Corporate Plan.</p>	

Commencement of works is planned to commence immediately by end of 2023, continuing through to 2025/2026.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the inclusion of the Valence House Museum and Borough Archive Conservation project in the Capital Programme in the sum of £1,206,250, made up of Arts Council of England grant totalling £881,250, UK Shared Prosperity capital grant of £150,000 and £175,000 from the Council's Parks Commissioning capital budget for lakes and watercourses;
- (ii) Note the planned trajectory for the delivery of the project, as set out in the report; and delegate authority to the Strategic Director, Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Head of Legal, to enter into all necessary agreements with the Arts Council to fully implement and effect the proposals; and
- (iii) Note that further significant fundraising will be required in the next 2-5 years to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities for its listed heritage sites and the accredited Borough Archives.

### **Reason(s)**

As outlined in the 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 resilience, 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.
- 1.2 At Valence House Museum and the adjacent Archives, Visitor Centre and surrounding green spaces, 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 the site has been chronically underfunded and this has manifested as: a skeleton staffing structure 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 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, officers have embarked on fundraising and new income generation opportunities to bring in additional resource; this includes a successful bid to Arts Council England's Museum and Estate Development Fund, and the leveraging in of UK Shared Prosperity Funds for urgent works across the site.

## **2. Detailed works funded by the Museum Estate and Development Fund**

2.1 Key areas of investment for funds include:

- Works to Medieval North Moat;
- Repairs to Valence House Museum main building;
- Replacement of roof and repairs to rooflights and shutters in visitor centre & archives building;
- Drainage repairs to north elevation of visitor centre & archives building;
- Replacement of external doors on visitor centre & archives building;
- Replastering internal spaces in visitor centre & archives building to repair water damage;
- Overhaul of air ventilation system in visitor centre & archives building.

2.2 This funding allows us to focus on key improvements to buildings and grounds at Valence House which will:

- improve infrastructure;
- reduce immediate risks to buildings, visitors, staff and collections by improving core infrastructure;
- build financial resilience and provide environmentally responsible custodianship (developing and implementing maintenance plans);
- increase environmental performance of the building assets and equipment to support the reduction in carbon emissions (supporting the museum sector);
- improve museum ability to offer independent access for disabled people and accommodation of diverse user needs;
- strengthen contribution to local community and regeneration by preserving landmark buildings and ensure public access.

2.3 Wider impacts and longer-term outcomes for Valence House include:

- Solving historic and ongoing issues of chronic underfunding to our heritage sites which manifests as ongoing losses to Barking and Dagenham Council;
- 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;
- Growing our Heritage Education provision to ensure all school children in the borough have access, and to build schools visits from outside the borough;
- Improving our commissioned projects, exhibitions and partnership opportunities to maximise the full potential of our Heritage provision across the borough and build visitor numbers;
- Improving access (including digital and physical) and representation for local people across all Heritage facilities and platforms;

- Managing and actioning urgent conservation works and repair issues across key heritage sites to meet our statutory responsibilities.

### **3. Museum Estate Development Fund Offer**

- 3.1 The funding offer is subject to the acceptance of Arts Council England's Standard Terms and Conditions – Museums Estate and Development Fund ('Terms and Conditions'), the Additional Conditions (if any) and the Monitoring Schedule and Payment Conditions.
- 3.2 This scheme is funded using money from Capital Grant in aid. It is restricted capital funding for the sole purpose of delivering the Agreed Project. It is shown as restricted funding in the Council accounts and capitalised on the budgetary balance in accordance with the Terms and Conditions.
- 3.3 If the Council spends less than the whole Grant amount on the Agreed Project, it must be returned unspent amount. If the Grant part funds the Agreed Project, the council must return the appropriate share of the unspent amount. As the Grant comes from public funds, the Council must account for any profit that is made from the Agreed Project and the Arts Council of England reserve the right to require the Council to pay back all or part of the Grant in accordance with the Terms and Conditions.

### **4. Proposal and Issues**

- 4.1 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 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.
- 4.2 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;
  - 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.

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1 As part of the Masterplan exercise at Valence House Museum, a resident and community consultation was conducted and concluded on 31 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.

## 6. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Sandra Pillinger, Finance Manager

- 6.1 The Culture and Heritage service has been awarded a capital grant of £811,250 for Valence House by the Arts Council from their Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND), plus an additional grant of £70,000 towards the works. An additional £325,000 will be contributed in partnership funding, comprising UK Shared Prosperity capital grant of £150,000 and £175,000 from Parks Commissioning capital funding for lakes and watercourses.
- 6.2 This project will form part of the Council's overall capital programme and will be monitored and managed through the Council's capital budget monitoring processes, to ensure adherence to grant financial conditions. It should be noted that the deadline for grant expenditure is 31 March 2026.

## 6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Feild, Principal Solicitor Standards & Governance

- 6.1 As set out in the main body of this report, the Council has received a grant fund offer from the Arts Council of England's Museum Estate and Development Fund. This will be subject to terms and conditions which must be followed with evidenced accounting for expenditure to deliver the grant funded project(s).

## 7. Other Implications

- 7.1 **Risk Management** – The Culture and Heritage Service will respond to and prioritise key recommendations from Conservation Managements plans and Quinquennial inspections for Valence House Museum to ensure we fulfil our statutory responsibilities to listed heritage sites under our custodianship.
- 7.2 **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.

Procurement of any works or services required need to be conducted in line with the Council's Contract Rules and the procurement legislation in force at the time

(currently PCR2015, after October 2024 new procurement legislation will be in place.)

- 7.3 **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 LBBD HR processes being followed.
- 7.4 **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 – a copy of the draft statement is at Appendix 1. It will be 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.
- 7.5 **Safeguarding Adults and Children** - 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:** Culture and Heritage Service Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Statement (draft)