

CABINET

19 March 2013

Title: "Celebrating our past, looking forward with pride": A Heritage Strategy for Barking and Dagenham	
Report of the Leader of the Council	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Accountable Divisional Director: Paul Hogan, Divisional Director, Culture and Sport	
Accountable Director: Anne Bristow, Corporate Director, Adult and Community Services	
Summary: The purpose of the Heritage Strategy is to provide a shared vision and a framework for the delivery and promotion of Heritage Services over the next three years. The development of the draft strategy has been informed by presentations to the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee and Assembly.	
Recommendation(s) The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Heritage Strategy 2013 - 2016 as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.	
Reason(s) To assist the Council in achieving its key priorities: Ensure every child is valued so that they can succeed; Reduce crime and the fear of crime; Improve health and wellbeing through all stages of life; Maximise growth opportunities and increase the household income of Borough residents.	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The previous Heritage Strategy ran from 2000 – 2010. Over the 10 year life of that strategy there were significant improvements to heritage provision in the Borough, not least being the major renovation schemes undertaken at Eastbury Manor House and Valence House Museum.
- 1.2 Now that these schemes have been completed and a new staffing structure and ways of working have been embedded it is appropriate to adopt a new strategic framework to drive the future delivery of the service.

- 1.3 Members will remember the very limited nature and quality of the displays and facilities that were available at the Valence House Museum and the Eastbury Manor House. £3.5 million was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund which was matched by £5.8 million from the Council to transform these venues.
- 1.4 The renovation projects have increased not only physical access to the historic properties but also to the heritage of the Borough through exhibitions, education programmes, events and activities. The new permanent exhibitions at Valence House Museum feature the maritime and fishing heritage of the Borough, the industrial heritage and Becontree housing estate. Also new interpretive signage at the Barking Abbey ruins is helping local people to better understand the national significance of this unique site.
- 1.5 The new Archives and Local Studies Centre at Valence House has improved access to oral, family and social history collections and projects such as Working Lives has recorded the oral histories of those who worked in the industries of the Borough. A history and literacy education project based on Dagenham Village in the 1920s created a book and interactive intranet site used by all schools in the Borough.
- 1.6 The success of this investment is evidenced by the increased use of services and facilities. Since reopening fully in 2010 total usage has increased from 34,610 in 2010/11 to 67,396 in 2011/12 and there has been further strong growth in visits during 2012/13.
- 1.7 As well as increased footfall, the quality of the service now provided at the heritage sites has been widely recognised:
 - The Museums Journal has described Valence House Museum as ‘one of the best local history museums in London’.
 - The service secured the prestigious Sandford Award in 2012 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.
 - Also in 2012, 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.

2. Proposals and Issues

- 2.1 This Strategy aims to build on this success and recognises that Heritage Services has not yet reached its full potential. There is scope for Heritage Services to better contribute to the priorities of the Council and increase awareness of the rich heritage of the Borough to both local people and visitors through better promotion. The aim of this strategy is to contribute to the priority themes and outcomes for Barking and Dagenham: Ensure every child is valued so that they can succeed; Reduce crime and the fear of crime; Improve health and wellbeing through all

stages of life; Maximise growth opportunities and increase the household income of Borough residents.

- 2.2 The vision for the 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 This strategy is intended to provide a framework around which we will focus our efforts over the next three years to improve the quality of life of local people. In order to do this, eight priority areas have been identified.
- Priority One: Collections
 - Priority Two: Pride and Promotion of the Borough
 - Priority Three: Inspirational Learning
 - Priority Four: More People Visit
 - Priority Five: More People Engage
 - Priority Six: Volunteering
 - Priority Seven: Improving health and wellbeing
 - Priority Eight: Financial Sustainability
- 2.4 The final version of the strategy and improvement action plan is attached at Appendix 1.

Resourcing the strategy

- 2.5 Section 10 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 A cornerstone 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 and beyond to secure funding from other sources working in partnership with local, sub-regional and national agencies.
- 2.8 A good example of what can be achieved in this respect is the funding recently secured from Arts Council England's Museums and Schools Programme. £140,000 has been committed over the next three years to improve the quality and number of educational visits to the Valence House museum. The service has also set targets to raise income year on year from events and activities.

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 the ability to lever in external funding to support service delivery.
- 3.3 Therefore, Members are recommended to adopt the strategy and improvement action plan with any amendments, removals, or additions as they consider appropriate.
- 3.4 If approved, it is intended to make the strategy available in an electronic format only.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation regarding the Heritage Strategy has been undertaken with various groups including staff, volunteers, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Friends of the Museums. There have also been presentations about the strategy to a pre-Assembly meeting of Members and the Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee.
- 4.2 All of the key recommendations from Members have been incorporated into the strategy, including: improved promotion to raise awareness of the Borough's heritage, which should go further than just the main heritage sites and include the likes of Dagenham Village and Barking Abbey ruins; development of exhibitions, collections and events to promote the Borough's rich industrial and trade union heritage; and the naming of streets and a 'blue plaque' scheme to honour and celebrate the Borough's local heroes.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Dawn Calvert, Group Manager (Finance)

- 5.1 The net controllable budgets for 2012/13 that contribute to the Heritage Strategy are as follows:

	2012/13 Current Net Budget £	2013/14 Savings £	2014/15 Savings £	2014/15 Remaining Net Budget £
Valence House	255,200		(40,000)	215,200
Eastbury Manor House	149,700	(10,000)	(40,000)	99,700
Archives and Local Studies Centre	273,700			273,700
Total	678,600	(10,000)	(80,000)	588,600

- 5.2 Previous agreed savings and savings agreed in the current budget process amount to £90,000. The strategy will have to be contained within the remaining budget.

There may also be subsequent savings proposed and approved over the life of the strategy.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Paul Field, Corporate Governance Lawyer

- 6.1 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 to that 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 Implications

- 7.1 **Risk Management** - The action plan for the strategy will be incorporated into the Culture and Sport annual service plan. Any risks associated with the successful implementation of the service plan are set out in the divisional risk register, which is reviewed by the Adult and Community Services Departmental Management Team on a quarterly basis.
- 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 improved accessibility of the facilities following renovation; 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 Children** - 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 Sport division'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.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

The links to other strategies and plans that have informed the development of this report are set out in section 6 of the draft strategy.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 - "Celebrating our past, looking forward with pride": A Heritage Strategy for Barking and Dagenham 2013-16