

Overview and Scrutiny

12 November 2024

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Museum Storage Options Appraisal

REPORT OF: Culture and Facilities Service Manager & Principal Estates Surveyor

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member for Enterprise and the Arts

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an appraisal of the options available to the Cabinet to address the museum collection storage pressures. The appraisal aims to provide a balanced evaluation of the options on the basis of financial cost, adequacy for storage of historic objects and any other relevant considerations. At this stage officers are seeking approval from members in respect of which options are to be discounted and which options officers should pursue further, along with approving the costs involved in developing these options, where applicable.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet:

- 2.1. That Cabinet note the current projected costs, advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- 2.2. That Cabinet approve use of the allocated £4m budget in the current capital programme for this project to develop more detail on the costs of Option D and to acquire the necessary details for a planning application to be made.
- 2.3. That Cabinet approve use of the allocated £4m budget in the current capital programme for this project to develop more detail on the costs of Option E, should a suitable property become available.
- 2.4. That Cabinet consider and give approval for officers to apply for grant funding towards the investigations mentioned in 2.2 and 2.3 and recognise the need to align investigations with grant funding timetables in this instance.
- 2.5. That Cabinet resolve to discount options A, B and G and recommend that they are no longer developed or explored further.
- 2.6. That Cabinet indicates which of the other options outlined within the report (C and F) should be pursued further and which should be discounted.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. Officers do not have the capacity or financial budget to progress all 8 options to an advanced stage and some early decisions are required in order to focus time and budget on pursuing the most advantageous options based on the best information available to officers and members at the present time.
- 3.2. In addition, the pursuit of greater detail on a number of the options will require expenditure on external reports and consultants which officers are seeking Cabinets approval to progress. Estimated figures are included in the main body of the report which can be found in Appendix 1 and are summarised in the Executive Summary Grid in Appendix 2.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Officers believe that all realistic options have been identified and explored and the nature of this report as an options appraisal is intended to provide an objective, balanced comparison of the option available in order to inform onward decision making.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Executive Member for Enterprise and the Arts has been kept fully informed of the museum collection storage pressures officers are facing along with the developments and updates on the exploration of each solution.
- 5.2. A report went to the internal informal Political Liaison Board of the Executive and the Leadership team, on 03/09/24 and the following comments were made:
 - It was agreed that some options should be discounted and not pursued further.
 - It was agreed however that all options considered should remain in the Cabinet report and highlighted as options which it is recommended the Cabinet discounts for transparency purposes.
 - It was requested that more detail of the costs of developing certain options to the next stage should be included to better inform decisions over next steps.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 15th July 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Officers have been asked to present a paper on the options for resolving museum collections storage to the committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The main body of the report is found in Appendix 1 – Museum Storage Report

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the following functions at 6.2.7 (c) of the Constitution; "To make reports or recommendations to the authority or the Executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive."
- 9.2 Cabinet Terms of Reference in the Constitution state that it may by resolution exercise the following functions set out at 5.7.15 'To oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council.'
- 9.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from the various options. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the projects outlined. Any commissioning of work on new and existing projects will follow the standard legal requirements and those required by the Council's internal standing orders, contained within the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The revenue implications vary depending on which option is taken forward. Details of this can be found in Appendix 1, with a summary also available in Appendix 2.
- 10.2 The capital implications vary depending on which option is taken forward. Details of this can be found in Appendix 1, with a summary also available in Appendix 2.
- 10.3 There are different financial implications for each option, however in order to progress as highlighted in the officers recommendation an expenditure of up to £30k will be incurred on developing plans for the existing land at Bury Mead Road (Option D) to planning application stage, with a further expenditure of up to £20k possible if a suitable building becomes available on the market (Option E) which officers feel is worth exploring further. All expenditure would be undertaken and managed in line with the Councils published contract and procurement rules.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. The risks of allowing the current storage conditions to persist are evidenced through the main body of the report in Appendix 1 and supported by Appendix 4 – Damage and Deterioration Details.
- 11.3. By evaluating all of the possible options using the best information available to officers at this time, it is intended that risks of proceeding with a less advantageous option are minimised. Further investment will be required before more reliable cost figures are ascertained however developing further detail on all options would lead to an avoidable waste of financial resources. Instead the officer recommendation is to progress options in a low risk and low cost approach at first, until greater dependency can be placed on the financial figures which are required to make a final decision. That final decision will be over which of the available options should be taken forward to ultimately address the museum collection storage pressures.

- 11.4. Although a £4m budget has been allocated for this project within the capital programme, the expenditures of £30k and £20k in pursuit of further details regarding options D and E respectively can only be considered as capital expenditure if one of these options is ultimately taken forward. If one or both of these options are discounted from the process then this expenditure would be treated as revenue expenditure and would therefore be unfunded expenditure.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. A combined Environmental and Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 10) has been undertaken, based upon and addressing all of the criteria within the Councils usual corporate template. The adapted impact assessment has been undertaken in order to separate the impacts of each option within the options appraisal. The primary equalities disadvantage with the current museum storage facility is that it is not accessible, however it is only possible to address this through some of the options evaluated within the report.
- 12.3. As some options are discounted and others are explored further in greater detail, the impact assessments will need to be updated and revised accordingly. These would then be included in any future committees where the project is reviewed.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.
- 13.2. Depending on the options chosen to progress further, officers will liaise with the procurement team and abide by the stipulations of the go local policy and any social value expectations as applicable to the value and nature of any contracts which are entered into in enacting members decisions.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 A combined Environmental and Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 10) has been undertaken and completed based upon the criteria within the Councils usual corporate templates. This combined impact assessment has been created so that all options considered within the report can be compared and contrasted over the key criteria.
- 14.2 At this stage, the primary environmental issues are the fact that the existing facility is very inefficient in its insulative credentials and its utility usage; coupled with the aesthetic appearance of both the primary facility and the overall site, which is in a poor state of repair overall and negatively impacts the collective appearance of surrounding areas. More detailed information on the remaining options will become clearer as these are investigated further however officers have strived to give an indication of the costs of developing options to net zero standards where this is feasible. This complies with the Council’s Climate Change Strategy, but additional consideration will be given as more details emerge. For example, considerations over the heatings systems of

different buildings, their proximity to public transport links and energy efficiency ratings are not possible to compare and contrast for all options at this stage.

- 14.3 As some options are discounted and others are explored further in greater detail, the impact assessments will need to be updated and revised accordingly. These would then be included in any future committees where the project is reviewed.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Officers within the museum service are currently tasked with working to preserve the museum collection of North Hertfordshire under difficult circumstances. The primary facility is at capacity which is creating health and safety issues for staff and visitors accessing the collection. Officers are managing these health and safety issues though they are having an impact on operations as a result of the control measures required. In addition, the current storage facility is not accessible. As a result, the options discounted and progressed further will have varying impacts on the degree to which these matters can be addressed and approved.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Museum Storage Report
- 16.2 Appendix 2 – Executive Summary Grid
- 16.3 Appendix 3 – North Herts Museum Collection Summary
- 16.4 Appendix 4 – North Herts Museum Collection Objects
- 16.5 Appendix 5 – Damage and Deterioration Details
- 16.6 Appendix 6 – Grants and Funding Considerations
- 16.7 Appendix 7 – Remodel Advice
- 16.8 Appendix 8 – Council Buildings Considered
- 16.9 Appendix 9 – Museum Storage Options Appraisal Financial Calculations
- 16.10 Appendix 10 – Equalities and Environmental Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 There are no background papers for this report.