

Agenda Item 8

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Culture, Recreation & Tourism Committee

Date: 13 June 2007

Report of: Acting Director of Cultural Services

Subject: New Historical Record Office and Resource Centre Project with East Sussex County Council

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update members on progress on the proposal to work with East Sussex County Council on the development of The Keep, a new historical record office and resource centre at Falmer.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 A full business options appraisal for The Keep be brought to the 12th September 2007 meeting of this Committee.

3 Background

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council has a contract with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) for records and archives management. The accommodation in which these unique and important documents are stored does not meet the British industry standards required to ensure their long-term preservation and sustainability. The Keep project aims to address the issues of long-term sustainability of these collections and also improve public access to the historical resources.
- 3.2 The Keep project also provides the City Council with the opportunity to overcome a number of issues around storage and access to collections, faced in particular by the Museums Service, at the same time as providing

opportunities to improve existing services through partnership working and co-location of services.

3.3 At the meeting of the Cultural and Tourism sub-Committee on 28th March 2007, members agreed:

- To the City Council joining the County Council's New Record Office Project Board membership to include the Chair of the sub-committee, now this Committee and the Acting Director of Cultural Services.
- For officers to further investigate and pursue the County Council's preferred site at Woollards Field for the location of the New Record Office in the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- To the Acting Director of Cultural Services to work with the County Council on developing and agreeing a mixed-use regeneration scheme for Woollards Field and the surrounding area that complements the new proposed developments in the area.
- To the Acting Director of Cultural Services producing a business case with service impact and financial risk assessment on co-locating collections from the Museums and Library Services in the proposed New Record Office.
- That progress reports on the project be provided to this sub-Committee and now to this Committee that the Council's future financial commitments are considered by this Committee prior to them being presented to the Policy & Resources Committee.

4 Site for the Location of The Keep

4.1 At its last meeting, the then sub-Committee was advised of the County Council's site selection process and that Woollards Field in the Moulsecomb area had been identified as its preferred location for the new facility. Woollards Field is owned by ESCC, but the City Council has a financial interest in the site and would benefit from approximately one-third of the proceeds from any disposal. The land is identified as an employment site for high tech and office uses, and is in close proximity to the proposed Falmer Academy, which if taken forward would release part of the current Falmer School site for other uses. It is also close to the proposed Community Stadium. In view of these linkages and potential wider benefits, the County Council agreed to consider the surplus land on the Academy site as a possible location for The Keep.

- 4.2 ESCC, together with Council officers, therefore carried out a second site scoring exercise on both Woollards Field and the surplus land. Having completed individual assessments, the results were shared at a meeting of the Project Team on 4 May 2007. This confirmed that while both sites performed well against the criteria, with little to choose between them in many areas, Woollards Field ranked above the released land and therefore remains their preferred location.
- 4.3 The project is working to a tight timetable, leading to the submission of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) by June 2008. The Project Manager at ESCC is keen, therefore, to secure final agreement to the chosen site as a matter of urgency in order to progress key areas of work ie procurement of the design team, fundraising strategy and ecology survey. The New Record Office Project Board is to receive a report from the Project Manager at its meeting on 4 June 2007, when a decision on the preferred site is to be taken. The Board is to be advised of the assessment results and the issues raised by each site, the board decision will be reported verbally to this committee.

5 Progress on Business Options appraisal

- 5.1 The Keep project presents an opportunity to improve access and storage to the Museums Service's significant collections. At the March sub- Committee meeting it was agreed that the financial implications for a range of options would be examined. In summary these are:
1. Maintain the status quo (the contract with ESCC for the archive and records management).
 2. Managing the archives and records management directly and terminating the contract with ESCC.
 3. Locating Brighton & Hove's archives, records and collections in environmentally suitable and accessible storage.
 4. Assessing what improvements can be made to the existing listed buildings' on-site storage areas to ascertain whether these can be made to meet standards for collections care and costing the improvements that would be required.
 5. The long-term viability of the off-site store and whether it is meeting service needs and offering value for money.
- 5.2 Maintain the status quo
- 5.2.1 Brighton & Hove City Council currently pays ESCC £350,000 per annum for records and archives storage and management. ESCC plans for The Keep to include the storage of records and archives. ESCC currently houses the records and archives in both ESCC owned and leased buildings. The revenue costs of running The Keep have not been calculated at present, therefore comparing

future costs of continuing the contract for the records and archives management with ESCC are unavailable at present.

5.2.2 Currently, the Museums collections are housed across all the Museum sites as well as at an off-site store, which costs £52,000 per annum. This accommodation does not meet sector standards for care of collections and access. The cost per square foot is £6. A recent search to relocate the Museums off-site stores in new accommodation indicated costs ranging from £7 to £11 per square foot. None of the sites were in locations that would be considered suitable for the long-term preservation and security of Museum collections.

5.3. Managing Brighton & Hove archives and records management directly, terminating the contract with ESCC and locating this material with Brighton & Hove's Museums collections

5.3.1 Recent searches for suitable alternative leased accommodation for the Museums collections have not been successful; similar standards are required for accommodation of archival material. This option could potentially necessitate a capital project, as the searches for alternative accommodation have been unsuccessful. It may be difficult to raise funds for such a project, particularly if two similar schemes were seeking funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

5.4. Improvements to the on-site stores

5.4.1 The current on-site stores are located across all the Museum sites and the Royal Pavilion in some 40 rooms. Those in Brighton Museum & Art Gallery were significantly improved as part of the redevelopment project. The rooms at the other sites are located in attics and basements and pose a number of challenges to bring them up to appropriate standards for care of the collections and access. Improving access to these stores in most cases is not possible, or requires very significant alterations and investment. Furthermore, environmental risks e.g. flooding, fluctuating temperatures are greater in these storage areas than in other parts of buildings. Improvements to these areas are not only costly, but also pose other issues in terms of good practice in historic building preservation.

5.4.2 Despite these difficulties a survey to ascertain which of the rooms can be made accessible and whether they can be made environmentally suitable for the collections will be carried out.

5.5 The long-term viability of the off-site store

5.5.1 The current off-site store is leased and costs approximately £52,000 per annum. It neither provides a suitable environment for the long-term preservation of the

collections nor can improvements be made to access. However, despite in-depth searches, alternative storage has not been found and the lease was renewed in early 2007 for five years.

- 5.6 The estimated revenue costs of relocating the Museums collections currently housed in the off-site store and the other venues in The Keep are not currently available. Once these are available, a full options appraisal can be developed. Without these costs, the Directorate cannot reach a recommendation on whether The Keep offers value for money for the long-term sustainability and improved access to the Museums collections.

6 Timetable and Work Programme Summary

- Audience Development Plan and Access Plans (ESCC) submitted to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), May 2007.
- Project Board decision on location for the Keep (June 2007)
- Develop and produce business cases for the future storage of Museums Service collections (June-August 2007).
- Brighton & Hove business options appraisal to be considered by this Committee September 2007.
- Brighton & Hove consultation on improving access to collections and services through The Keep (October- December 2007). ESCC complete fundraising feasibility study and strategy, December 2007.
- Stage 1 application to HLF, June 2008.
- HLF decision, December 2008.
- Complete to full design, January-December 2009.
- HLF decision on Stage 2, 2010.
- Construction of building, 2010-2011.
- Moving in and opening 2011.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The new Historical Record Office and Resource Centre project with ESCC is an ambitious project with potential to provide an exciting new facility and service of regional significance. It provides an opportunity to address issues of long-term accessibility and sustainability of the Museums Service collections and an exciting new cross-sector approach to learning and research from original documents and collections.
- 7.2 The Council must, however, be confident in entering into a formal partnership to proceed with this project that it offers value for money and that future revenue costs can be met from existing resources.

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Financial implications

The Council currently pays ESCC £350,000 per annum for records and archives storage and management. The options appraisal work to be completed as outlined in section 5 of the report will enable the Council to assess the financial implications of the various options, which will be reported back to this Committee in September, there are no financial implications for the Council in completing this appraisal. All work that is being undertaken to prepare the HLF bid is being funded by ESCC including the outline building design.

Accountant consulted: Patrick Rice Date: 18th May 2007

Legal implications "There are, at this stage, no direct legal implications for the council in its membership of the New Records Office Project Board nor are there any adverse implications arising from this report in relation to the Human Rights Act 1998.

However it should be noted that the Major Projects Sub Committee has been tasked to oversee the work of Major Projects Boards and the progress of Major Projects as well as reviewing Major Projects, regard being had to (i) the council's capacity to deliver, (ii) corporate priorities and (iii) resources. It remains to be seen if this particular project and the proposed Joint Project Board will come within the purview of the Major Projects Sub Committee and what in practice will be required in terms of additional reporting. It may be considered prudent to refer this report to the first meeting of the Major Projects Sub Committee to clarify this point.

Lawyers consulted: Dianne Bates & Bob Bruce Date: 18th May 2007

Corporate/Citywide implications

The preferred site at Woollards Field has the potential to link the Keep project with adjoining developments at the Falmer Academy site and the transport improvements linked to the Community Stadium project. This could provide additional benefits and complementary facilities such as shared access and car parking.

Risk assessment

The report indicates the need to complete a full business case with options analysis, service impact and risk assessments before any commitment to The Keep project is given.

Sustainability implications

1. The current storage of the collections doesn't conform with the best standards of collections care necessary for the long- term

Equalities implications

The Keep project provides the opportunity to greatly improve access to the collections for researchers, learners and the public. This improved access to the collections will mean that

<p>conservation and sustainability of the collections. Purpose-built accommodation will ensure better long-term care of the collections.</p> <p>2. Natural History collections have an important role in understanding the environmental and biodiversity issues that are now faced. They contain the material evidence of current, historic and geologically ancient biodiversity and species distribution. Through these we can gain an understanding of processes of environmental change at work at local, national and even international levels. The Museum collections can be used to monitor environmental damage eg pesticide levels in egg shell, or more recently the thinning of eggshells as a result of atmospheric pollution. Natural History collections record in some detail the local environment. Using collections it is possible to interpret and restore modern habitats and distributions, and to use this knowledge to measure the sustainable environments we are trying to achieve. Not to forget our role in using the collections for educating the public.</p>	<p>the collections can be better used and reinterpreted for new programmes and projects and in particular to non- users.</p>
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<p>Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder None</p>
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<p>Background papers <i>[Part 1 reports only]</i> 1</p>
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