



Doncaster Council

Date: 23 JUNE 2021

To the Chair and Members of CABINET

DONCASTER ARCHIVES OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND CAPITAL BUSINESS CASE

| Relevant Cabinet Member(s) | Wards Affected | Key Decision |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Cllr Nigel Ball, Cabinet Member, Public Health, Leisure, Culture and Planning | All | YES |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Doncaster has a significant historical asset in its archives collection, dating back to the 12th Century. The scale of archives and local history has the potential to offer a wide-ranging research facility to the borough's residents, enhances learning, skills, engagement, family history tourism, and pride in place.
2. The local authority has statutory duty to provide for the management of its historical records and artefacts as an essential part of their effective administration and governance. It is the Local Authority's responsibility to receive and maintain all local archaeological finds as directed by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
3. Before the development of the Danum Gallery Library and Museum, improved strategic engagement and development of a strategy, alignment to The National Archives (TNA) and organisations such as English Heritage progress has been limited; the result of which has meant that access to investment opportunities and thus for the public availability has been insufficient.
4. In 1982, a temporary decision was made to relocate historical and public records in to a former school building (Balby Archives). This facility had poor public access and storage conditions that were not fit for purpose and therefore reviewed in recent years, resulting in a number of archives being stored off site, whilst a new facility was identified.
5. The investment at Danum Gallery, Library and Museum and move from the Chequer Road Museum has presented the opportunity to reconsider where the archives could be accessed, stored and public service delivered through a process of modernisation, transformation, and consolidation, working with colleagues from the Council, service users, and The National Archives. The proposal in this report

identifies the refurbishment of the Museum on Chequer Road to house a range of Doncaster Archives, currently located offsite to enable a longer-term solution with the aim of this investment plan will ultimately enable archives to underpin and enhance knowledge of, and access to, Doncaster's history, heritage and public records. This will not be the case without investment, and a development and transformation plan.

6. The site of the previous museum on Chequer Road has been identified as a potential location for Doncaster's Archives, the Local Studies Library collection and co-location with the Doncaster and District Family History Society. A condition survey of the building indicates that with improved internal conditions, some additional refurbishment, improved public access and compliant storage installation, alongside environmental controls, the facility could be developed for this use. There are also large numbers of archaeological items in storage, resulting in significant ongoing cost.
7. This report outlines plans for the short, medium and long term, with a primary focus on the short term requirement for compliance in line with legislation and The National Archives, identified a phase 1 in paragraph 5.2. The report outlines the current ongoing costs of storing historical records and artefacts off site and the cost associated with the refurbishment of the previous museum site.
8. In addition to the archives stored off site, whilst not subject to immediate concerns, paragraph 5.3 identifies the need to undertake a further review of assets stored in other facilities that house a number of artefacts and exhibits. In the medium to longer term, neither facility is suitable for storage purposes.
9. At present there is a 16 year backlog to accession and inventory museum assets which have not been catalogued; 3-5 years' worth of archaeological finds, and as yet unidentified number of years' worth of archives backlog.

EXEMPT REPORT

N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Cabinet is asked to:
 - Note the information provided in the report; and
 - Approve to drawdown and commence spending the £1.5m allocation for Archives included in 2021/22 Capital Programme, as detailed in this report.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

11. Doncaster Archives will achieve better value for money for Doncaster's residents, improving the service offer significantly, making it more accessible, increasing usage and value by residents.
12. The service will be better integrated into Doncaster's cultural strategy and learning offer, providing greater opportunities for residents to conduct research more easily.

BACKGROUND

Context

13. Doncaster archives maintains a collection of approximately 420m³ of historical and public records. Public records, which include historical and contemporaneous documents from the health, education, police and justice sectors, at 33.17m³ amount to approximately 12% of the collection. There are tens of thousands of individual items in the collection, in various media and sizes. A large majority of items can be stored in standard archive boxes; equally, many items are unique and individual in size and shape. Most Local Authority archives collections would typically maintain sufficient space for 25 years' worth of growth in accessions.
14. By October 2019, the premises used for storage in Doncaster (Balby Archives) were severely compromised due to the archives building fabric deteriorating at a rapid rate, and due to significant health and safety concerns that meant that staff and public were at risk of injury on site. Water ingress, damp, mould and dry rot left the structure of the building significantly weakened, with the heritage assets inside exposed to some deterioration. The site lacked sufficient on-site security as the building degraded, leading to an increased risk of theft of the historical and public records (most of the lead from the building roof was in the last two years of its use stripped and stolen).
15. The challenges of working on site and the significant risk posed to the archives location necessitated the commissioning of specialist contractors to be used for temporary storage. The collections were successfully decanted into facilities outside of the borough (Deep store in Cheshire for historical and public records that were not contaminated by mould, and Harwell in Oxfordshire for the thousands of records that required treatment and conservation). In line with regulations, permission was sought from The National Archives' in order to transfer records (where permission was necessary) to another location.
16. Throughout this time, the service has continued to engage both strategically and operationally with the statutory body for overseeing how local authorities manage their archives; The National Archives (TNA). Council officers and The National Archives regional and national staff have developed a positive working relationship, with Doncaster Council's continually appraising The National Archives of the plans for Doncaster.

Phase 1 – Ensuring Compliance

17. The first and immediate priority for Doncaster Archives is to achieve compliance with The National Archives and to return Doncaster assets back to the borough for residents to access.
18. A condition survey has been undertaken to establish the suitability of the Chequer Road premises. The survey has identified costs for repairs, compliant storage, public access and maintenance works to be costed, prioritised and planned. The survey has reviewed the suitability of the building to operate as a multi-use facility, incorporating museum and art gallery stores, archives research and storage a local studies library, staff and volunteer work areas was commissioned. The survey identifies works necessary to bring the premises up to a serviceable state of repair and to rectify potential breaches of legislation and health and safety regulations.

19. To date an allocation from the directorate's service and capital budgets of £565k has been allocated, however, to ensure that the works identified in the condition survey are met and to secure the return of the archives currently located offsite, a further investment of £1.5m is required..

20. This investment would be required for the following items identified in the condition survey:

- Building Fabric: £672k
- Electrical Installations: £694k
- Mechanical Installations: £34k
- Museum Asset Removal and Management (creating space for archives to be returned from commercial storage: £50k
- Creation of a public research area in the Chequer Road site: £50k

21. The investment identified above will enable the co-locating of the Doncaster Archives, the Local Studies Library collection and the Doncaster and District Family History Society, meaning that residents have access to an extensive publicly accessible collection located in the town centre, and with archives (currently located off site at the cost of £123,594 per annum) returned to Doncaster.

22. The planned completion date for this work is October 2021. The service is working closely with The National Archives (TNA) to ensure that any works is compliant and fit for purpose, ultimately resulting in the return of the Doncaster Archives to a central facility with access to the public. The items currently in storage are conserved, and used for exhibition, display and educational purposes.

Phase 2 – Cataloguing and Storage of items at other Heritage sites.

23. In addition to the archives stored off site, the following sites all store Doncaster artefacts, exhibits and archives. All of the identified sites require some remedial action to ensure suitability for storage, therefore it is recommended that a further review of assets is undertaken, a condition rectification plan is developed and working closely with key agencies identify opportunities to access external funding, to bring provisions to the required standard to ensure that these sites are suitable for storage in the medium to longer term. The sites currently storing assets are:

- Cusworth Hall (Second Floor Rooms)
- Bentley Storage Facility
- Chequer Road Building

24. It should also be noted that at present there is a 16 year backlog to accession and inventory museum assets which have not been catalogued; 3-5 years' worth of archaeological finds, and as yet unidentified number of years' worth of archives backlog.

25. A detailed feasibility study will be undertaken, a detailed plan and funding options will be returned to Cabinet in spring 2022.

Phase 3 – Longer term Transformation Programme

26. There is a national drive as well as local benefit for moving towards a digitisation of archives, and whilst this would enable a much broader reach, reduce pressure on storage and present commercial opportunity, Doncaster is not yet in a position to consider this option, until the remedial action in the short and medium terms identified above are completed.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

27. Stop providing the service all together – this was not considered further. The collections in Archives detail the history and heritage of the borough from at least the 12th Century. A modern Archives service can enhance learning and skills, and enhance aspirations and understanding for both the borough's adults and young people. It would be difficult to apply a financial value to the assets in the collection. The reputational damage, and strategic relationship damage, with major funders would be long lasting and of greater consequence and cost than the cost of maintaining the Archives.
28. Consortium services – there is the potential to explore further the shared storage of some of the Archives (cold storage) across the South Yorkshire region, and there is also an offer of support from Sheffield Archives to reassess what we hold, how it is catalogued and managed, and how it can be improved in future. It is too early for Doncaster to consider this, but due to needing to deliver on phases 1 and 2 of this report first, however, this exploration will form part of the review as part of the phase 3 element highlighted in this report.
29. Commercial Storage Facility/Outsourcing – The National Archives commercial storage venues are limited, those available have been assessed, which prices upward of the figures currently being paid for a proportion of the Councils archive assets and artefacts offsite storage. Where facilities are lower in cost, these facilities do not provide the assurances for the Council or TNA compliance in relation to environmental and conservation requirements. These facilities lack the technical requirements to conserve and maintain historical and public records safely and effectively.
30. Working with the Council's property services team, a review was undertaken of sites available e.g. the former Stapleton Centre in Warmsworth was examined at length as a possible interim storage site, but The National Archives raised concerns related to the levels of fire detection, fire doors/resistance and intruder detection, which would present too big a risk for any classified categories of documents to be stored at this location. The costs of adapting and fitting-out the building (and therefore any existing vacant Council asset) were prohibitive for what would have been a temporary site. The Council does not have any other property available that would be suitable for the service's needs, for the same reasons. The service has considered the option of acquiring and converting a warehouse, but in the final analysis, it was clear that this would not be a cost effective solution for temporary storage needs.
31. The service is however able to use a Council-owned shop unit in Colonnades to store museum assets on a short-term basis, to create space in the Chequer Road building for shelving to be installed, and archives to be returned. This is considered cost prohibitive for the type of service offer detailed in this report. No land nor scoping nor capital has been identified for this purpose. A long term option, in maintaining the Chequer Road building, could be to apply for external capital funds to extend to that building, or convert part or all of it.
32. The Chequer Road building, despite the issues described in this report, continues to be advantageous compared to other options. It is a Council-owned building, in an accessible location for the public, with car parking and on-site amenities. £565k is allocated within current capital budgets and service budgets for improvement works

from May 2021 onwards, pending Cabinet decisions,, with the team ready to conduct works of the phase one improvement works to the Chequer Road building as soon as necessary approvals are given for the additional £1.5m from the capital finance programme, and with work conducted from May to October 2021.

33. The recommended way focus for phase 1 is to safeguard the archival materials, make the materials finally and definitively accessible to the public, with higher levels of engagement and income generation, would be a mixed economy of:

33.1 Retention of the Chequer Road facility for hot and medium storage (phase one, dependent on approval of this report), whilst

33.2 Returning Archives which are currently in store at commercial rates and which would go in to the Chequer Road site, and publically accessible (also part of phase one, dependent on approval of this report).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

34. It is expected that the recommended options will have less ongoing revenue cost and / or less capital costs than any other option detail in section 6 of this report. The location of the former museum site on Chequer Road is still the best location for accessible research for the public using the borough’s archives. Whilst requiring a range of adaptations and improvements, the building is secure, has good storage capabilities, and has environmental control capabilities. In terms of long-term cost implications, enhanced customer service, efficiencies in service, and the equality and opportunity of access.

35. This investment made by Doncaster Council will help safeguard and enrich our wide and expansive range of archives and broaden the service offer in line with the revised Borough Strategy and ensure the service can continue to invest in the rich historical heritage of Doncaster.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

36.

| | Outcomes | Implications |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment | <p>Access to quality cultural experiences, including heritage experiences which Archives can support and enhance, are reported to be a factor as important as quality of schools in an area when people make decisions on where to live.</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster’s people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage | <p>High quality heritage-focused interventions require professional, organised heritage asset management. These interventions then build on social and cultural capital. Heritage Doncaster has demonstrated in 2019/20 that interaction with heritage has increased respondents appreciation for where they live by 14% by accessing heritage in their community. 94% of participants in the Arts Council England-funded National Portfolio Organisation work reported learning new skills, and 86% shared their knowledge, skills and memories.</p> |
| | <p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> | <p>Children and Families with access to good heritage and broader cultural experiences demonstrate better quality of life outcomes, including in terms of educational</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work | <p>Achievement, health and wellbeing, pride in place and social cohesion. Access to heritage can enhance learning across a broad range of curricular activity, and enrich learning across age ranges.</p> |
| | <p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes | <p>Doncaster Archives has worked previously with people living with dementia in care homes; more work is required to evaluate the impact locally, although there is an evidence base that shows how people interacting with heritage resources can have improved recall and in turn improve their wellbeing. Reminiscence can give people with dementia a sense of competence and confidence through using a skill they still have. See: https://www.scie.org.uk/dementia/living-with-dementia/keeping-active/remembrance.asp</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance | <p>The transformation plan described in this report, if fulfilled, will create an Archives service which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agile and responsive to customer needs - Modern, fit for purpose, outward-looking - Engaged with priorities which support people's needs in localities - Utilises technology to deliver efficiencies - Utilise effective commissioning and partnership working to deliver efficiencies - Demonstrates effective Governance and records management. |
|--|--|--|

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

37. The condition survey has identified significant concerns with the museum building that must be addressed to bring the premises up to a serviceable state of repair and to rectify breaches of legislation and health and safety regulations.
- 37.1 The Council must provide a suitable location to house Public Records and it must be approved by the National Archives otherwise there is a risk that the records may be removed. The records are currently stored externally and this is incurring additional costs for the Council. Loss of records will create reputational damage which will make it more difficult for Heritage Doncaster to access external funding in future, having secured c.£1.7m of external funds for programmes of activity since 2016-17.
- 37.2 If additional storage is not provided it may be necessary to dispose more of the Council's valuable and often irreplaceable heritage collections, again with high reputational risk in the sector. Museum stores in the Bentley storage site are mainly large, heavy items. Further assessments will be required on load bearing weights within the Chequer Road site to understand where heavier and bulky items in storage can go.
- 37.3 It is a risk that further works are required on site that have not been identified at the start of the design stage, or for other reasons, that lead to overspend on the capital budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials SRF Date 30.04.21]

38. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with a general power of competence, allowing the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to purchase goods and services.
39. Any procurements made in relation to converting the former museum into an archive research facility, to fit out the museum to allow the storage of frequently accessed archive store and to arrange archive storage for less frequently accessed archives off site must be carried out in accordance with the Council's contract procedure rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
40. Any plans to convert the former museum will require further legal, procurement and planning considerations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [SB 05/05/21]

41. The cost of investment to the former Museum site based on Chequer Road for the storage of the Council's future archives, including historical records and artefacts is expected to cost £2.065m for a work as follows.

42.

| Description | Amount (£000) | Funding Source |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Fire Safety Work | 242 | Capital |
| Racking | 323 | Earmarked Reserve |
| Sub Total | 565 | |
| Improvement work | 1,500 | Capital |
| TOTAL | 2,065 | |

43. The £1.500m capital budget provisionally approved as part of the 2021-22 capital budget setting process will be funded from Corporate Resources, subject to approval by cabinet. This £1.500m will be added to the £0.242m capital budget and the £0.323m earmarked reserve to give a total capital budget of £2.065m for this project. The capital programme will be adjusted to include the revised budget of £2.065m.
44. The current annual external storage costs for the archives service are £123k or £10.3k a month (based on current contract costs). This is a continued budget pressure for Learning Opportunities and Skills. Following completion of phase 1 this pressure is expected to reduce to zero as archives material is brought back to Doncaster.
45. As part of this proposal, the service is to use a Council-owned shop unit in Colonnades to store museum assets on a short-term basis, to create space in the Chequer Road building for shelving to be installed, and archives to be returned. The estimated cost for this building is £20,000 per annum. This is also a short-term budget pressure for the 2021-22 financial year.
46. The phase 2 cataloguing and storage of items at other heritage sites will be subject to a further Cabinet report that will be presented in spring 2022. This cabinet report will provide a detailed feasibility study on the review of current assets of the Service alongside the funding options to ensure that storage sites are suitable for storage in the medium to longer term.
47. As part of the phase 3 longer-term transformation programme the service may move towards a digitisation of archives. Further reports would be required at this stage to identify any costs or savings resulting from this programme.
48. Facilities Management currently hold a general fund revenue budget of £284,670 for the former Museum site on Chequer Road. This budget covers the current running costs of the building including utilities, rates and insurance and it is assumed sufficient for the running costs of the archives facility.
49. The museum and archives Service is still subject to a pending restructure and the Service has confirmed that the new structure will be sufficient to manage with increased public access and outstanding cataloguing work still required.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials CR Date 30/04/2021]

50. There are no immediate HR implications arising from the approval of this report and the proposed move of Archives, however, future changes, such as relocation, that may impact on the workforce will require HR engagement and would involve separate

approval or consultation as appropriate.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 29/04/21]

51. There are no specific technology implications at this stage. However, the project manager/lead should consult with ICT at the earliest opportunity to discuss the refurbishment plans for the Chequer Road site, so that the impact on the existing ICT infrastructure and any new technology requirements for Doncaster Archives can be fully considered. All ICT costs would need to be funded as part of the overall scheme. Where applicable, a report may be needed for consideration and prioritisation by the Technology Governance Board (TGB), depending on the scope and nature of the work needed. A TGB report will also be needed in relation to the longer-term transformation programme/digitisation of archives when the service is able to consider this further following the remedial action in the short and medium

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials RS ...Date 26/04/2021]

52. There is increasing evidence that heritage services including archives can contribute to health and wellbeing. Decision makers will want to ensure that future services are accessible to all Doncaster residents.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NS...Date 5/5/21]

53. Access to historical and public records must be achieved in a way, which does not discriminate against the service user or potential service users, and the same applies to how and why materials are collected and conserved. Any procurement processes will show due regard for equalities, both in the commissioner and in the contractor. Any future service will ensure changes and new ways of working have accounted for the needs of residents with protected characteristics as defined by the Equalities Act 2010.

CONSULTATION

54. Consultation with TNA has been ongoing and extensive. The Council has secured TNA's ongoing support during a challenging period for the service of change management. Consultation also continues on an ongoing basis with Heritage Doncaster staff, local heritage groups of interest, and further consultation on any building adaptations and installations will be in consultation with the same groups and other local providers of expertise, particularly when considering the Council's statutory equality duty.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DGLAM - Danum Gallery, Library and Museum
KOYLI - King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
TNA - The National Archives

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