

<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Cllr Tony Thomas – Lead Member for Housing & Communities Alan Smith – Head of Business Improvement & Modernisation
<b>Report author</b>	Craig Berry – Business Information Team Manager
<b>Title</b>	Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Project

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 This report is about a proposal for a new purpose built Passivhaus Archive building in Mold, to house the newly formed Denbighshire and Flintshire Joint Archive Service. The new archive centre is subject to securing National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant funding and match funding from both Councils.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 Approval is sought to submit a Round 1 application to the NLHF.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 Cabinet agrees to the joint Archive Service submitting a bid to the next stage (Round 1) of the NLHF Heritage Horizon Fund.
- 3.2 To note the potential call on £2,034,521 of Council funds in order to deliver the new archive centre. This is subject to the bid being successful at the Round 1 stage of the NLHF grant application process and receipt of a firm offer of funds.
- 3.3 Cabinet endorses the approach to Ruthin Gaol and the planned expansion of the heritage attraction, as outlined in section 4.8.

## 4. Report details

- 4.1 Both Councils have legislative duties to collect, preserve and make accessible documents of historical importance. Flintshire (FCC) and Denbighshire (DCC) councils are facing several challenges that are affecting their ability to meet these legislative requirements and have been working collaboratively over the last couple of years on creating a more sustainable and improved archive service for the region. This has resulted in the launch of a single shared service, initially over 2 sites – Hawarden & Ruthin. The joint service has developed an NLHF Heritage Grant Horizons bid to fund both the construction of a new purpose built Passivhaus building adjacent to Theatr Clwyd in Mold and an associated 3-year activity plan.
- 4.2 The proposed site in Mold was selected from a site feasibility study, which was conducted by an independent consultant (executive summary shown in Appendix E).
- 4.3 Key milestones are set out below:

October 2019	NLHF Heritage Horizon Award - Expression of Interest
February 2020	NLHF Heritage Horizon Fund Award –Presentation
April 2020	Launch of joint archive service
Feb 2021	NLHF Heritage Horizon Award - Round 1 submission due
June 2021	NLHF decision on grant award

### 4.4 **NEED**

- 4.4.1 The Archive Service within DCC occupies 70% of Ruthin Gaol with the Council's Heritage Service running a visitor attraction in the remaining 30%. It is an old building, designed for incarceration, with significant running/maintenance costs and operational inefficiencies. The proposed move to a new purpose built Passivhaus archive centre would allow DCC to avoid certain costs. These are detailed in Appendix D but the most significant costs are set out below:
- I. The archive service is expected to run out of space in 2 years' time and there is very little scope for expansion on site. Costly commercial external storage and retrieval services would then have to be considered.
  - II. The environmental management system at the Gaol is coming to the end of its lifecycle. Replacement will cost in the region of £65k.
  - III. Air cooling equipment will require replacing within the next few years and estimates suggest that these will cost in the region of £650k.
  - IV. Total building running costs of £70k per annum and are increasing each year.

4.4.2 It's estimated that the investment needed for the archive service to remain at the Gaol will prove more expensive by 2035 than the £2 million required for the new build.

#### **4.5 AMBITION**

4.5.1 This project aims to create an inspiring and accessible cultural centre becoming the chief source for the history of North East Wales combining two local authority archive services, and bringing together 900 years of archives. This project will enable the joint service to diversify audiences and develop an impactful presence in the region.

#### **4.6 OPPORTUNITY**

4.6.1 The bid has been shortlisted from 200 received down to the final 12 and is the only remaining bid from Wales. The NLHF have been very complimentary about the project and in particular, have praised the way we plan to diversify our audience and engage with sectors of our community that have traditionally not used archive services. The innovation and potential for the project has also been recognised by several important and influential stakeholders, who have in turn, provided letters of support - Ken Skates (AM), The National Archives and Association Records Council Wales (see appendix A).

#### **4.7 WHAT WILL DCC GET OUT OF THIS PROJECT**

4.7.1 See Appendix D for table of cashable and non-cashable benefits.

4.7.2 A bespoke environmentally friendly building providing long-term sustainability.

4.7.3 Permanent outreach provision of Archive services utilising our library network.

4.7.4 A flexible and learning focused Archive building, which Denbighshire schools, higher education colleges, children and adult services and volunteers can benefit from.

4.7.5 Access to an in house conservation service and state-of-art conservation facilities.

4.7.6 Access an additional resource - 9 more members of staff- via the combined service.

4.7.7 An injection of funds that will enable collections to be taken out to communities.

#### **4.8 PLANS FOR RUTHIN GAOL**

4.8.1 A working group has developed exciting and innovative plans for expanding the heritage attraction at the Gaol, so that the vacated space is used to offer:

- Development of immersive Cell Experiences;

- An outdoor 'Escaped prisoner' trail;
- A Play Area;
- Creation of a large multi-function room;
- The removal of the glass security screen;
- Bring together Denbighshire's Heritage Collections and displayed; and
- A dedicated area for Archives/Family History activity.

4.8.2 The Business Improvement & Modernisation Service has agreed to build a £65k reserve specifically for these developments. The Heritage Service are also working on bidding for external grant sources, which will allow for further service expansion.

## **5. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

5.1 The new build will only go ahead if £11,588,041 NLHF Heritage Horizons grant monies is secured. The estimated total cost of delivering this project is £16,650,344. DCC will be required to contribute 40% of the match-funding component, which is £2,034,521, Flintshire has agreed to contribute 60% - £3,027,782.

## **6 Impact on Other Service**

6.1 Heritage Service – the vacation of Archive service from Ruthin Gaol providing an opportunity for Heritage Attraction currently occupying 30% of the site.

### **6.2 OPERATION OF AN ASSET OUTSIDE COUNTY BOUNDARY**

6.2.1 During the life of the building it is proposed that FCC to retain freehold for the land and the building and DCC will enter into a lease with FCC outlining clearly the terms of the shared occupation of the building. This lease would be for 25 years to begin with, pepper corn rate, and review periods and the opportunity to renew at the end of 25 years or expire. Cost sharing will be done based on population- currently 60/40 and reviewed in light of any new census data. Considering the end of life of the building, it is proposed that DCC would not seek any return from sale or otherwise of the asset as the initial investment of capital by DCC, over the 25 years of operation, would have delivered a benefit to the organisation over and above any sort of return from sale.

## **7 What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1 The assessment is shown in appendix B and outcomes are as follows:

- i. A prosperous Denbighshire and Flintshire - Positive
- ii. A resilient Denbighshire and Flintshire - Neutral
- iii. A healthier Denbighshire and Flintshire – Positive

- iv. A more equal Denbighshire and Flintshire- Positive
- v. A Denbighshire and Flintshire of cohesive communities- Positive
- vi. A Denbighshire and Flintshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language- Positive
- vii. A globally responsible Denbighshire and Flintshire – Neutral

## **8.What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

- Cabinet Briefing - November 2018, October 2019 & November 2020
- AMG - July 2019
- Communities Scrutiny Committee – October 2019 & October 2020
- Ruthin MAG – October 2020
- Online public surveys (2019 and 2020)

## **9 Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 The decision is very much one of prioritisation. Allocation of funds to this project during the current financial climate will either limit funding available for other future projects or increase the budget gap in future years which can only be funded by either increasing Council Tax or making service savings. If the application is agreed and then approved by Welsh Government there would be a need to identify base budget of approximately £120k for borrowing costs. Strategic Investment Group have been briefly updated and will need to consider the request for funding in the coming months. If approved then the final decision on approving the funding would come back to Cabinet.

## **10 What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 Risks are listed in appendix C

## **11. Power to make the decision**

- 11.1 Local Government (Wales) Bill—General power of competence for Local Authority's.
- 11.2 The Local Government (Records) Act 1962 (i) - make records in their possession available for study and (ii) to contribute towards the expenses of persons looking after local records.
- 11.3 The Local Government Act 1972 Section 224 requires all principal councils to make proper arrangements for the care and preservation of any documents.