

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	24 th October 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Emrys Wynne: Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture & Heritage / Liz Grieve: Head of Housing & Communities
Report author	Craig Berry: Joint Archive Service Manager
Title	Storage Solution for our Archive Collections

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report is about the future storage arrangements for our archive collections.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 A decision is required regarding the Council's preferred long-term option for the storage of our archive collections.

3. What are the recommendations?

3.1. That Cabinet support Option 2 as the preferred option, i.e., (subject to a successful funding bid, see 3.2 below) to build a new joint archive facility on the Theatr Clwyd campus in Mold to relocate our archive collections from Ruthin Gaol and develop a community-based activity plan to reach all communities across Denbighshire. A detailed summary of the available options is attached at Appendix A.

3.2. That Cabinet authorise officers to submit a joint funding bid with Flintshire County Council (FCC) to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Wales, seeking a capital grant value of £7m to fund a new purpose-built net carbon zero building on the Theatr Clwyd campus.

3.3. That Cabinet allocate £2,052,358 of DCC capital funding as our match towards the new joint archive facility, subject to the NLHF funding bid being successful.

- 3.4. That Cabinet support the preparation of plans to enhance the visitor offer within Ruthin Gaol, including retaining an archive presence on site.
- 3.5. That Cabinet confirms that it has read, understood, and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (Appendix C), as part of its consideration.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The Council has a statutory duty to collect, preserve and make accessible documents of historical importance. This statutory duty is subject to stringent standards with regular accreditation assessments to monitor compliance.
- 4.2. DCC and FCC have been working collaboratively for a number of years to create a more sustainable and improved archive service. This resulted in the creation of a joint service called the North East Wales Archive (NEWA). Given both Councils face similar issues with buildings that are no longer fit for purpose in terms of storing archive material, there is a desire to find a joint solution.
- 4.3. Denbighshire stores its archive material in Ruthin Gaol. There are a number of issues with this arrangement, (i) the storage space is now full (ii) the environmental management system and gas fire suppression systems, necessary to maintain air quality and to protect the materials, are at end of life (iii) the layout is inefficient.
- 4.4. The current arrangements are therefore not sustainable, and a solution needs to be agreed. Appendix A considers the various options open to the Council, and Appendix J shows a comparison of options against various key criteria.
- 4.5. It is clear that there is not a “do nothing” option as the current arrangements cannot fulfil our statutory duty. All the available options come with significant costs, and all the options have risks linked to potential increased costs, disruption to service, loss of accreditation etc. There is no ideal, no cost solution.
- 4.6. Further to Capital Scrutiny Group’s support following a review of the business case, officers are recommending Option 2, a single joint archive building with FCC, as this clearly provides the best value for money over the next 25 years. A c.£2.1million capital investment from DCC at a cost of c.£138k a year will achieve long term security and future proofed storage for our archive collections. Not only will this protect our accreditation status for the long-term, it will also provide service resilience; shared

operational costs; the opportunity for efficiencies; and an extended and improved service for the residents of Denbighshire.

- 4.7. All other options will either cost more than Option 2, or those that cost less are not significantly less and those costs are likely to increase over time.
- 4.8. Appendix B provides further information on issues relating to DCC's archives service.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1. The proposed Option 2 supports the Corporate Plan Theme 'A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language'.
- 5.2. The project will make at least a neutral contribution (but more probably a positive contribution) to the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1. The estimated total cost of the project is £12,520,896 million, with DCC's contribution of £2,052,358 million equating to 16.39% of the total value. In terms of the Prudential Borrowing necessary to raise our Capital contribution equates to circa £138k a year for 25 years.
- 6.2. Appendix D provides more details of the costs by option.

6.3. Impact on Other Services:

Legal & Procurement: support required in respect of contractual arrangements related to grant funding and the collaborative building arrangements between the councils.

Finance: support required in relation to the establishment and support of the collaborative service.

ICT: support and input required in relation to the future ICT solution and application.

Design and Construction: input into procurement of employer's agent and development of the building.

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

7.1. Given NEWA is a sub-regional service, the WBIA was considered across both counties. The assessment is shown in Appendix C 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?

- CET July 2021, October 2022
- SIG Sept 2019, Dec 2020, Jan 2022
- Cabinet Briefing - November 2018, October 2019, November 2020, January 2023, September 2023
- Cabinet November 2020
- Capital Scrutiny Group September 2023
- AMG - July 2019
- Communities Scrutiny Committee – October 2019 & October 2020
- Ruthin MAG – October 2020 & November 2022
- 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. The funding will form part of the overall capital plan and capital borrowing requirement. If Option 2 is agreed and the grant application approved by NLHF, there will be a need to identify base budget of £138,637k for borrowing costs for DCC match-funding requirement. However, since the original business was discussed the project team has been challenged to fully explore all the options. Officers have now undertaken this work and it appears that this isn't a 'no cost' or 'low cost' option. The preferred option has the benefit of leveraging in significant external funding (if the bid is successful), with an asset that is fit for purpose for the long term. It should also be noted that the prudential borrowing will not be required until 2026/27.

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

10.1. Please refer to the risk register which is attached at Appendix E.

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.