

# Delegated decision report

## DECISION UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

**DECISION CANNOT BE TAKEN BEFORE TUESDAY, 19 MARCH 2013**

Title	<b>A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE ISLAND'S HERITAGE</b>
Report of	<b>CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LOCAL SERVICES</b>

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this paper is to agree a framework under which the council and various existing groups will work together to maximise opportunities to protect, preserve and display the Island's cultural heritage, possibly in a refurbished Newport Guildhall.

### OUTCOMES

2. As a result of the recommendations:
  - The Island's heritage organisations would work together toward agreed shared goals, to create an Isle of Wight Heritage Strategy which they can all support.
  - The Island's heritage collections would be made more accessible, so that more people can see, understand, enjoy and learn from more exhibits;
  - The council, by working closely with voluntary organisations on the Island, would have developed a more innovative heritage offer for residents and visitors;

### BACKGROUND

3. "Heritage" means many different things to different audiences. For the purposes of the review, this report and the proposed new Island Heritage strategic framework, heritage has been defined as follows, using the English Heritage description of heritage as a guide:
  - the historic environment (landscapes which mankind has affected through time, including the introduction of settlements and towns);
  - objects of any size which have an historic value, because they can tell a story to current and future generations about how life was lived in previous time; and
  - documents which have an historic value, because they can tell a story on the same basis.
  - the personal legacies of Island people and their achievements.

The council's heritage work is focused through the Island Heritage Service. This works with a wide range of partners, on and off-Island. In January 2013, Cabinet decided to adopt a series of high level principles, which were presented as Appendix A to the report securing support for the future of the Island's records, and are set out at Appendix A to this report for ease of reference. Since this time, the service's officers have worked with partners to build on these core principles, to develop them into the strategic framework which is set out at Appendix B to this report. This appendix sets out a way in which the service would become, with these partners, a key player in a wider and more broad-based heritage sector on the Isle of Wight.

4. Under the strategic framework, the service will work with partners to develop a range of services, which protect, preserve and interpret the Island's rich heritage, so that it might inform and inspire future generations of Islanders and visitors alike.
5. The council's approach to its heritage services would also be defined by the framework. It would be a clear marker of the council's community leadership role and underline the council's commitment to preserving promoting and making accessible the Island's history, whether environmental, or in the form of documentation, artefacts or buildings such as the Guildhall. This would also reinforce the council's role in supporting a real sense of pride in the Island.
6. The council runs a number of accredited museums, which display approximately six to seven percent of the council's holdings of artefacts. This figure is on a par with the large national museums but a formalised partnership framework offers an opportunity to increase the amount of the Island's heritage that the public is able to access. the council's heritage partners also wish to display more of their collections so there is a need to explore new and suitable venues, through the framework, which would permit more people to enjoy the Island's heritage. As part of the strategic framework, the service will refocus its resources on providing professional and expert advice on storage, conservation, curation and display of items held by partners, and to enable those partners to put on displays.
7. The service also comprises a record office and archives function, the Heritage Education Service and an historic environment and archaeology team.
8. The January 2013 cabinet report addressed the urgent need to re-house and publicise the Island's records. The strategic framework set out in Appendix B puts the Island's archives at the heart of the heritage of the Isle of Wight. It is vital that records and archives are preserved, displayed and interpreted, so that the documented history of the Island can be understood and enjoyed by more people, visitors and residents alike.
9. A key part of interpreting the Island's history is for children and young people to be inspired by the heritage they see around them. The council, in partnership with the Carisbrooke Castle Museum Trust, operates the Heritage Education Service. This takes historic objects out into classrooms, or leads workshops and research visits to the castle, in support of a range of curriculum subjects, from history to design and technology.
10. The strategic framework proposes that this service be able to work with a wider range of partners, to enable more of the Island's history to be interpreted for and by Island children.

11. The Island's heritage also includes the built environment and the landscape. The impact of humans on the Island can be monitored through the preservation and study of historic sites of habitation and activity, from Palaeolithic times to the industrial archaeology of the twentieth century. There are a number of organisations engaged in this area of work, and the council's historic environment and archaeology team will continue to work closely with its partners under the new strategic framework.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

12. The recommendation supports the Eco Island Sustainable Community Strategy themes of an *inspiring Island* because it seeks to safeguard the Island's heritage collections, so that future generations can learn about the Island's history and culture.
13. The recommendation in the report also supports the vision as set out in the Corporate Plan 2011-13, to challenge and deliver services in more cost effective ways by engaging with local communities and partners.

## HOW THE FRAMEWORK WILL WORK

14. The vision for the Island's heritage is that it will preserve and support the interpretation of documents, artefacts and places from the Island's past, which explain its present, and which can inform and inspire its future.
15. This would be delivered through an Island-wide heritage partnership network, with all member organisations working together to further public understanding and enjoyment of the Island's history. The agreed priority areas for this style of working are set out at Appendix A, which was first published in the January 2013 Cabinet report. It is important to note that the council will not seek to control the operation of the sector, nor will it underwrite its development through funding.
16. An important element of this vision will be an emphasis on maintaining and increasing where possible, access to the council's collections of documents and artefacts, for residents and visitors alike, so that even more people may learn about the Island's rich past.
17. The implications of the recommendation are outlined here and evaluated later in this report.
  - a. The emphasis of the council's heritage services would be placed firmly on opening access to existing collections. As part of increasing its partnership working, the council would undertake a qualitative review of its artefacts to ensure those actually on display are those of most interest, of historical value or most relevant to the Island's history. This would also ensure that the council had some space for future treasure finds of importance and historic relevance to the Island. This approach would increase opportunities for other partner groups to be able to display items - currently kept in storage and therefore out of sight - around the Island in appropriate and suitable locations such as bespoke exhibitions or libraries. (see also paragraph c below.
  - b. A new heritage facility, housing the council's archives and Local Studies collection, alongside key historic objects which would tell the "Island story", would be

established, at the Guildhall in Newport. Not only could this provide an appropriate use for such an important historic building in the county town of the Island, but it could also offer the opportunity for the service to work with partners to develop a new focal point for explaining the Island's history to residents and visitors. This is something which partners and stakeholders expressed a clear desire to see, during the review. The development of the Guildhall in this manner could need to be supported by bids to major funding sources, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, to enable the council to expand the interpretation and accessibility of its collections. Through the review, partners have indicated they would support such a bid.

- c. Further to paragraph (a) above, an key element of increased access to the collections would be a service-wide focus on enhanced interpretation. This would include building on the existing success of the Heritage Interpretation team, working with on- and off-Island schools of all age groups. The plan will also develop the dispersal of artefacts around suitable and appropriate community buildings, such as some libraries. Furthermore, the Service would focus on supporting partners to display items. Many of these partner organisations operate solely on the basis of enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers, who, through the review, expressed a desire to access the Service's expertise to enable the partner organisations to improve their displays and to support quality improvement still further, throughout the voluntary heritage sector on the Island. There is a clear opportunity, through the deployment of volunteers, for more exhibitions to be put on, showing more items of historic interest to more people in more places, than the council would have the resources to do. The service's role will be to ensure that items displayed remain safe, so that future generations may continue to enjoy them.
- d. The council would work with partners to explore different ways of closer partnership working. As a result of this, new opportunities may arise, to deliver council services in different ways. These would be investigated, to identify ways in which innovative service improvements can be introduced.

## CONSULTATION

- 18. The council invited partners to contribute to the council's thinking on its strategic heritage direction, through an advertisement feature in the local press, and through a series of workshops, all in 2012. Following this, interested groups have been brought together for a workshop to develop the strategic framework into an action plan. This meeting is scheduled for March 2013. The 2012 feedback informed the core principles set out at Appendix A, from the January 2013 report, and the strategic framework set out at Appendix B builds on these principles.
- 19. Internal consultation has featured the Cabinet Member, IWC Director and Senior officers, and Heritage Service staff were involved in the development of the framework in late 2012.

## FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

- 20. In the financial year 2011/12 the Island Heritage Service budget was £579k.
- 21. The council is not in a position to underwrite the total delivery of the strategic framework nor is this its declared policy intention. The council is an enabling body, seeking to commission services rather than deliver them itself in all cases. The council is seeking to work with partners to develop shared projects, and to commission additional heritage

displays and events from its partners where possible as well as to play its part in attracting external grant funding.

22. This commissioning role does not have a bespoke budget and must be undertaken within existing resources.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. The Heritage Service includes various areas that are covered by separate pieces of legislation containing obligations and powers, in determining how to manage the heritage function the authority should have regard to the same. So long as the Council, as a minimum, continues to meet its statutory obligations there is no risk in making a decision of this type.

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

24. The council as a public body is subject to general and specific duties under equality and diversity legislation and as such has a duty to impact assess its service, policies/strategies and decisions with regards to diversity legislation and the nine “protected characteristics” (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation).
25. Three Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been undertaken to ensure that the statutory equality duties are given due regard and wherever possible, any identified negative impacts are either avoided, or mitigated against in the Action Plans. The EIAs are attached to this report at Appendix B. One assesses the impact of the recommendations on partner heritage organisations on the Island, the second assesses the impact of the recommendations on residents and visitors to the Island, and the third assesses the impact of the recommendations on staff.
26. The assessments are being taken into account in the decision making process and actions will be taken to mitigate any impact. The reframed service will promote equality and diversity and ensure that the services provided and the decisions made enable the provision of an adequate standard of service. Each change has been examined, so that the impact of that change has been considered as part of the whole.
27. The proposals in the recommendation have therefore been informed by the equality impact assessments and take account of the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and the equality duty. In summary, the EIA notes that there will be an overall neutral impact on residents, visitors, partners and staff who share the protected characteristics in the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership). However, with the proposed enhancements to Council buildings housing historic items, there would be a positive impact on residents, visitors, partners and staff who shared the specific characteristic of physical impairment.

## PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

28. The Guildhall in Newport would be affected by the recommendations, but the property implications of using the Guildhall have already been addressed, in the Cabinet Report from January 2013.
29. There are no additional property implications of the recommendations in this report.

## CARBON EMISSIONS

30. There are no clear reductions in the Council's carbon emissions as a result of the recommendations in this report

## OPTIONS

31. The options considered when making the recommendation in this report were:

**Option A** - To adopt the strategic framework as the basis for future heritage partnership working on the Isle of Wight

**Option B** - To continue with the current heritage offer, with no strategic framework

## EVALUATION

### **Option A**

32. This option would see the heritage sector on the Isle of Wight developing a shared strategic vision, for the first time since the Council launched its heritage services.
33. Specifically, this option would clarify the role of the council in the operation and protection of heritage services, and would highlight the value, importance and potential of the many voluntary heritage groups, which exist across the Island.
34. This option would see the council streamline its operation, and invite its partners to share in this, to avoid duplication and to focus on each partner's key strengths. This would build on work already undertaken by the Island Heritage Service's staff and heritage partners.
35. Under this option, the Guildhall could become a focus for a range of partnerships between the council and its heritage partners. It would offer different spaces for displays, to be created by the many different heritage groups which exist in different parts of the Island and would use the expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm that exists in those communities.
36. In addition, the Guildhall could act as a cultural reference point, signposting residents and visitors to a wide range of heritage attractions. This would provide valuable marketing and advertising for partner organisations, and would contribute to the Island's cultural tourism offer.

37. The council's collection is one of several important collections of documents and artefacts on the Island. Council officers have been in negotiation with some key collection holders, to explore closer partnership working to allow more people to see more of the exhibits both organisations hold. Examples of how this could work, to improve the accessibility of collections and also support the sustainability of the Council's collections going forward, could be:

- cross- or through-ticketing, to encourage multi-point visits to attractions;
- joint displays; expanding on the existing online cultural portal on the Council's website, [www.iwight.com](http://www.iwight.com), to allow better access to images of artefacts; or
- better cross-signposting of events and opening times.

Such partnership working is in line with Arts Council encouragement, to bring heritage organisations together to improve the experience of visitors to exhibitions and sites of historic interest.

38. This option could also provide a framework, within which some current projects could be brought together to achieve a strategic aim. The prioritisation outlined in Appendix A would help to identify these aims.

39. This option would provide the framework, which stakeholders requested, during the review. Specifically, stakeholders sought professional guidance and expert opinion from council officers within the service and the framework would enable this to happen. This is because it would allow the service to focus on its acknowledged areas of expertise: conservation; storage standards, curation and interpretation.

40. This option would also offer the council the opportunity to explore innovative ways of ensuring its heritage obligations were delivered in full. Closer partnership working is likely to highlight areas where the council is less well-placed to exploit external grants and other funding streams than partners in the voluntary and community sector. It may be that, in time, heritage services could come together, wholly based in the community, which could take forward the Council's agenda of commissioning services from the voluntary sector.

## **Option B**

41. This option would see the council and its heritage partners continue as now, operating separately. Although there is still joined-up working, there is no clear agreed approach to co-ordination, which can lead to duplicated effort.

42. Under this option, the council could commission services from its partners, but there would be no framework under which it was commissioning or working in partnership. Although the core principles at Appendix A would be observed, opportunities for heritage organisations to pool expertise and resources to maximise the importance of the Island's history would be lost.

43. Without a strategic framework, it would be more difficult to set out partnership guidelines and parameters. Therefore, it could be more difficult for the Council to be clear about the extent to which it would resource partnership projects. This could lead to unknown, and therefore uncontrollable, financial risks (see below, under Risk Management).

44. This option would result in a missed opportunity. Without a strategic framework, there would continue to be no single mechanism for co-ordination across the Island's heritage sector. This in turn would mean that the sector's voice would not be heard strongly in the debate about the Island's visitor economy and also its necessary education improvements.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

### **Option A**

45. This option holds low levels of risk for the council, overall. Increased partnership working will not contribute significantly to the revenue obligations of the council, and would enable the council to plan its heritage expenditure, so the financial risk is low. This may be affected by additional insurance costs, but would all be within the council's ability to control. The reputational benefits for the council in working closely with partners, and particularly in putting more of its collections on show, mean that the reputational risks would be low. The operational risks for the council, in terms of lending more of its collections, would be medium because more items would be on loan, in more places. This would have inevitable consequences for a small team supporting more displays. However, by working with partners to understand the national display requirements (primarily security, light and humidity levels, plus interpretation), it should be possible to develop a shared understanding about what it is appropriate to display, and where. Adherence to agreed standards, pulled together as part of an Island-wide strategic framework, would limit the operational risks to the council. Any future developments of the partnerships, which might explore alternative delivery methods for the council's heritage services, could also reduce the council's exposure to operational and financial risks, but would have to have a robust basis on which to proceed, to limit the potential reputational risks of partnership joint ventures facing financial difficulties.

### **Option B**

46. This option holds medium levels of risk for the council, overall. The existing partnerships would continue, but would lack a strategic vision which brought the different strands of working together in a coherent way. Therefore there would continue to be the current operational risks, where a small team (recently reduced in number) would work with partners without a clear approach to managing partners' expectations of the level of support they could expect. The balance being struck at present is between trying to satisfy partners wherever possible, with minimising the impact on the Council's professional team of heritage experts. This balance is not achieved all the time, and is unsustainable. This could expose the council to reputational risks, where partners' expectations are not being met. In addition, the lack of a strategic plan for heritage spending could expose the council to financial risks.



**RECOMMENDATION**

**Option A**

To adopt the strategic framework as the basis for future heritage partnership working on the Isle of Wight.

**APPENDICES ATTACHED**

[Appendix A](#) – Island Heritage – core principles

[Appendix B](#) – Island Heritage strategic framework

[Appendix C](#) – Equality Impact Assessment

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[The Future of the Island's Public Records – IWC Cabinet report, January 2013](#)

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Decision

Signed

Date

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