

CABINET

Report of the Council Assets Task Group Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To present Cabinet with the findings of the Council Assets Task Group and to seek the agreement of Cabinet to the recommendations as set out in the report.				
Key Decision		Non-Key Decision	Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee	X
Date Included in Forward Plan				
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Cabinet considers the work of the Council Assets Task Group and the adoption of the recommendations as set out in the attached report.
- (2) That Cabinet considers the Officer Comments on the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 All details are contained within the attached report.

2.0 Recommendations and Officer Comments

2.1 Recommendation 1

- (a) That a co-ordinated approach for applying for external funding for heritage projects be developed and led by an appropriate Director, such as the Corporate Director (Regeneration), with consideration given to identifying heritage projects which would meet the criteria for external funding and engaging with/supporting community groups who take an interest in promoting the district's heritage.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 1

The Head of Cultural Services already coordinates an officer group (which includes representation from Economic Development & Tourism Service, and Planning

Service) on a thematic Heritage Group that liaises with Lancashire County Council's Museums Services and the North West Development Agency, etc. The above recommendation could be absorbed by the Heritage Group, although any such move would require involvement from other central services such as Finance.

Members may also wish to note that a bid is being prepared for submission to Northwest Development Agency, seeking funding for the preparation of a cultural heritage strategy for Lancaster. This follows on from the work of the Heritage Group referred to above and fits within the investment framework being developed via the Lancaster District LSP. If successful, it will provide a strategic framework to steer future investment in major heritage related projects in Lancaster. Local community groups, together with other relevant key stakeholders, would be involved in an extensive consultation exercise as part of the preparation of this strategy.

Any decision on the allocation of staff to support this approach will be for the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service.

2.2 Recommendation 2

- (a) That greater links be developed with interested parties including the Civic Society and the Lancaster Archaeological and Historical Society.
- (b) That consideration be given to producing well-focused leaflets and the erection of information boards, particularly with regard to the Queen Victoria Statue and the Roman Bath House remains.
- (c) That the City Council support the Civic Society in revising the guide to Lancaster Cemetery and assist with publication and promoting the guided tours.
- (d) That the City Council utilise its consultation facilities to undertake a consultation exercise to ascertain public interest and raise awareness in the district's heritage which might provide a useful tool in developing proposals for the centenary.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 2

The Head of Planning Services ensures that all these groups are part of the public participation exercises in the development of the Local Development Framework, and will work with these partner organisations to obtain support for public realm and heritage improvements.

2.3 Recommendation 3

- (a) That the programme of works from the Condition Surveys be given priority in the Capital Programme and that funding be made immediately available to start this important work.
- (b) That upon completion of this programme of works a rolling programme of maintenance for the historic buildings within the City Council's property portfolio be devised and that this programme should include painting.
- (c) That buddleia and other vegetation be removed from the buildings to reduce the possibility of further damage to the fabric of the buildings and this be managed within existing resources.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 3

The programme of works referred to is already identified in the capital programme but the programme is not currently funded due to the difficulties in obtaining capital receipts in the existing economic climate, although alternative funding is being proposed (see separate item elsewhere on the agenda).

The Head of Property Services will put in place a planned maintenance schedule once the backlog of repairs works identified in the capital programme.

The vegetation identified in the report will be removed as soon as we can get a cost effective method of doing so, as the cost is fairly high and the budget for this year for repairs is already under pressure.

2.4 Recommendation 4

- (a) That the Charters of Lancaster be relocated to the Records Office in Preston for conservation, storage and safekeeping whilst ownership remains with the City Council, and enquiries be made with the Record Office as to the complimentary copies they would be prepared to produce.
- (b) That an application be made for heritage funding to produce copies of all of the City's historic charters for public display.
- (c) That the original 'Williamson Family Tree' currently stored in the Legal Services strong room be transferred to the Records Office for conservation, storage and safekeeping and enquiries be made with regard to commissioning a copy for future display in Williamson Park, subject to the agreement of the Williamson Park Board.
- (d) That consideration be given to finding innovative means of funding a rolling repair programme for the oil paintings and other restorative works to non-fixed assets in Lancaster town Hall; including that a percentage of the hiring fees for the Banqueting Suite, Ashton Hall and tours of Lancaster Town Hall be channelled into a 'Restoration Fund.'
- (e) That an updated inventory and where appropriate, condition survey of the City Council's fixed assets be undertaken.
- (f) That attempts are made to exhibit more of the Council's assets including the relocation to, and display of, the Morecambe Music Festival silverware in Morecambe Town Hall.
- (g) That consideration be given to the future use/storage including the possibility of disposal of some items of furniture in view of the limitations on space within the town halls as a consequence of the Access to Services Review and that Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) guidance be followed in the event of any disposal.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 4

The Head of Property Services would welcome a more proactive approach to a formal arrangement for the storage and exhibition of key documents and assets together with the proposals to update inventories, restore and improve the non-fixed assets, provided suitable funding can be provided. The disposal of furniture would relieve pressure on storage requirements, whilst potentially producing some income for the Council.

Recommendations 4 (a) to (g) have resource implications which would need to be identified and considered prior to taken any decision.

2.5 Recommendation 5

- (a) That a regularly updated centralised records management system be developed with a central inventory to ensure consistency and reduce duplication.
- (b) That services identify which, if any records they consider need to be transferred to the Record Office and advise the Information Management Officer.

- (c) That the Information Management Officer engage with the County Archivist regarding records retention and arrangements for the transfer of agreed material to the Records Office and this be financed through service budgets.
- (d) That the Information Management Group be requested to ensure that each service revisits the current retention and disposal schedule to ensure records they hold are covered by it.
- (e) That all services are encouraged to dispose of documentation/records for which there is no longer a legal or viable need in conjunction with Corporate policy and, if need be seek clarification from the Information Management Officer.
- (f) That any important documentary records remaining in the town halls be relocated from the strongroom to a more suitable location.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 5

Recommendations 5(a) to (g) concern operational matters and will be considered by the relevant officers at a meeting of the Information Management Group on 26th September 2008 and a report on the action to be taken will be provided after that date.

2.6 Recommendation 6

- (a) That Cultural Services continues to raise awareness of the Museums Partnership and takes an active role in promoting the heritage of the district further.

Officer Comments on Recommendation 6

With the agreement of Lancashire County Council's Museums Services the City Council has included a review of the existing Museums Partnership Agreement within Cultural Services 2008/2009 Business Plan. The above recommendation is an operational matter rather than a Cabinet decision and can be absorbed within the above.

3.0 Conclusion

All details are contained within the attached report.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

None

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If Cabinet supports any of the recommendations as set out in the report, each recommendation would require developing further with all relevant Services. This would highlight what can be realistically achieved within resources that are available. Individual financial implications would be assessed at this point.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Many of the individual recommendations are expected to have costs attached but they cannot readily be identified at this stage. For this reason, if Cabinet is minded to support any of the recommendations, it is advised that this should be either 'in principle' or 'subject to costs being met from within approved budgets.' Further reports back to Cabinet would then be produced, if need be.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal Services have been consulted and have no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Not all the recommendations of the Assets Task Group are for Cabinet decision. Where these are operational matters to be considered by the relevant officers, this has been highlighted in the report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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