

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

At a Meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 10 December 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Armstrong in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors P Stradling, E Adam, A Batey, H Bennett, D Boyes, R Crute, B Graham, K Henig, J Hillary, A Hopgood, P Lawton, J Lethbridge, M Nicholls, C Potts, L Pounder, M Simmons and J Turnbull

Also Present:

Councillors J Clare, P Conway, M Davinson, N Foster, C Hampson, A Laing, N Martin, T Pemberton, B Stephens, O Temple and M Williams

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bell, K Corrigan, S Forster, T Nearney, J Robinson and S Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Future Arrangements for the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Collection

The Board considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and the Assistant Chief Executive that provided information on the implementation of future arrangements for the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) collection. A presentation was given by the Head of Culture and Sport (for copy of report and presentation slides, see file of minutes).

Councillor Neil Foster, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration appreciated that the future arrangements for the DLI was a very sensitive issue and stated that even in the current challenging financial environment, heritage was to be celebrated while assets were to be utilised in the best way possible.

Stephen Howell, Head of Culture and Sport gave a detailed presentation on the process and how the future DLI Museum arrangement would be implemented highlighting the following areas:-

- Current context of the decision;
- Overview of the DLI Collection;
- Nature and Scope of the Future Offer;
- Developing the Content and Programme;
- Decant and Residual Issues;
- Anticipated Outcomes of Future Offer;
- Partner Observations, Trustees and Army Museums Ogilby Trust;
- Next Steps.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Culture and Sport for a very exciting and informative presentation.

James Ramsbotham, Chairman of the DLI Trustees thanked Durham County Council for the support and strong representation they had received. He acknowledged that Trustees had considerable responsibility for a collection that means so much to so many people and was confident that with the continued support, the story of the DLI would be preserved as part of Durham's history for future generations.

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services informed the Board that it was no longer possible to provide the service as it stands. He advised that changing times required new and creative ways of telling the DLI story including the use of digital technology to reach more people. The Council have to find savings of £290m and can no longer provide the same services on their own. Finding new and innovative ways of working with partners to maximise the collective ability was important in order to retain the heritage and promote Durham through the schools education programmes for future generations.

The Chairman invited questions from Members of the Committee:-

Councillor Adam agreed that the presentation was very positive and indicated that there had been mis information regarding the Authority's point of view in the media. The Council had been portrayed as insensitive when dealing with the situation and he asked if officers agreed that communication could have been better handled and if the other five military museums under threat were fully aware of the possible implications. Councillor Foster responded that lessons had been learnt. He felt that there had been too much focus on what was happening with the building and not enough on the collection. The Council tried to get the message across via press releases and he had answered a question relating to the DLI at full Council, however he acknowledged that there had been difficulties with communications. Regarding the relationship with other museums, he clarified that they were all aware of the financial situation and have continued to be under pressure for a number of years.

Councillor Hillary felt that emotions were high due to the lack of information regarding future intentions. He asked that the Council and Trustees make a statement on behalf of the regiment explaining the future of the collection in order to help alleviate some fears. He questioned if the money allocated for resources was realistic, taking into account staffing, curators, property lease and climate control. The Chairman of the DLI Trustees

responded that the Trustees had issued a number of letters in the media and would be issuing another statement shortly. The Head of Culture and Sport advised that the Sevenhills facility already housed other collections and a space had been created for the DLI collection. He clarified that costs would include capital and funding grants and the £70,000 revenue would fund education programmes and animation to bring the collection to life.

Councillor K Henig commented that the current admission fee could not maintain and preserve the collection taking into account the overall financial pressures and felt that under the new arrangements, admission would be free which would be inviting to the public. She referred to the sensitive issue of loved ones ashes scattered on the land and asked if a permanent memorial on the site had been considered for families to visit. The Chairman of the DLI Trustees advised that the land was not consecrated ground but would continue to be regarded as a memorial area. The Board were informed that the Council has had discussions with the Cathedral regarding the potential option of transfer of turf from the DLI site to the palace gardens after families had been consulted. He added that memorial benches would be part of the project as it moves forward.

Councillor Hopgood commented that she would have liked the information to be presented much earlier and agreed that there were lessons to be learnt. She asked for confirmation that the DLI would not be part of the Aykley Heads redevelopment site and questioned what would happen to the Art Gallery. Councillor Foster confirmed that the DLI was not part of the Aykley Heads development site. The Head of Culture and Sport added that the Art Gallery was under a separate budget and informed the Board that the Council were looking at potential property in the City for exhibition programmes that would also move around the County.

The Corporate Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that a total of £290M of savings were to be made with part having already been made from back office services and unfortunately now, front line services would have to be affected. He felt that this project was an example of how providing Council services could be creative going forward.

Councillor Batey agreed that it was a comprehensive presentation and was pleased that the land issue had been clarified. As Vice-Chairman of Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee she found the inventive nature very positive and exciting.

Councillor Potts added that timely communication was vital and it would be useful to have the same presentation at Area Action Partnerships.

Councillor J Lethbridge commented that the Authority had a considerable responsibility regarding the changes to the DLI and how that change was managed was important. He was pleased to hear that the landscape would remain unchanged and agreed that a monument would be very welcome. He asked that access for elderly people getting to Palace Green be considered and suggested that a bus service should be arranged.

Councillor Crute advised that the objective for the DLI collection was to reach as many people as possible and to boost economic development and tourism. He suggested that 'Visit County Durham' be involved in future engagement plans as they have proven to be very effective in marketing and promotions. The Head of Culture and Sport advised that they were already in discussions with Visit County Durham as part of the economic agenda.

The Chairman invited questions from other Members:-

Councillor Williams welcomed the exhibition at the Gala and suggested that equipment could be stored in the building at Gilesgate.

As local member for Aykley Heads, Councillor Martin supported the request for a permanent memorial, however felt that for a city like Durham not to have a museum reflects poorly on the County. He agreed that lessons had to be learnt and felt that the presentation should have been made before the Cabinet decision was made in order for views to be taken into account. He felt that the majority of public concerns were due to the lack of information and that the press releases failed to get the full story across.

The Chairman agreed that communication could have been managed better and that future communication was to be precise. He assured members that Scrutiny would monitor the progress.

Councillor Foster added that money would be spent on the collection and promotions to ensure Durham was recognised locally and on a national scale and added that articles in the media and press releases would continue. He felt that public perception would improve when final arrangements were in situ.

Councillor Temple felt that receiving the presentation and details of financial contributions in advance would have helped in understanding the role and relationships between the Authority and Trustees. He raised the same concerns as Councillor Hillary regarding the money allocated and also questioned if the amount was realistic for the entire scheme. The Head of Culture and Sport advised that a new agreement between the Authority and Trustees would be reported back along with approval of a new format as it develops in the future. He explained that money allocated was divided into two areas with £20,000 for the education programme and officers retained in the structure, the remainder would cover animation and exhibition costs. He was confident that the results could be achieved within the expenditure identified and that efforts would be made to attract other project resources and grants in delivering the programme.

In response to suggestions from Councillor Davinson regarding memory boxes and reaching out to residents of sheltered and day care facilities, the Head of Culture and Sport advised that museums in a box were already part of the education programme that would continue and welcomed any exhibition suggestions.

Councillor Laing commented that she had strong connections with the DLI as her husband was part of the DLI for 23 years. She was delighted with the opportunities presented for the future of the collection.

Councillor Williams suggested that the Dennis Donnini memorial plaque currently located within the County Hospital grounds be removed and placed in an appropriate location.

The Chairman highlighted the sense of pride in County Durham regarding its industrial heritage and the DLI and felt that the offer was an innovative resolution to many financial issues that must be promoted. He thanked the Head of Culture and Sport, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods, Councillor Foster and James Ramsbotham, Chairman of the DLI Trustees and advised that Scrutiny would be looking at the progress over a period of time.

Councillor Hopgood referred to the recommendations within the report and asked that a progress update be reported back to the Board in 3 months to enable the Board to give further consideration to the new agreement between the County Council and the DLI Trustees regarding the future management arrangements of the DLI Collection as well as the promotional information and press engagement scheduled for January. The Chairman advised that the usual process was for update reports to be brought back to the Board within 6 months, however 3 months may be possible.

Resolved:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) That the additional information provided by Councillor Neil Foster, Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration, Terry Collins, Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and Steve Howell, Head of Service – Culture and Sport, Neighbourhood Services in respect of the proposed implementation of the future arrangements for the DLI Museum be received and noted;
- (iii) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management welcomes the positive feedback from the DLI Trustees and the Army Museums Ogilby Trust in respect of the future of the DLI “collection” arrangements;
- (iv) That further detailed update reports be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the progress made against the implementation timetable for the new DLI collection management arrangements, the first of these to be considered after a period of three months from the date of this meeting and to include consideration of the new arrangement with both the University and the DLI Trustees regarding the future management arrangements of the DLI collection.