

Cabinet

16 June 2021

Review of DLI Collection Archive and the Future of the DLI Building and Grounds



Ordinary Decision

Report of Corporate Management Team

Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Elizabeth Scott, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships

Councillor Richard Bell, Deputy Leader Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The report sets out proposals to review the options for the display of Durham Light Infantry (DLI) collection, archive, building and grounds.

Executive summary

- 2 The Council's Joint Administration has requested a review of the proposed arrangements for the care, storage and display of the Durham Light Infantry Collection, archive, museum building and grounds. This is a key priority to review and ensure that the proud and significant military history of County Durham is recognised.
- 3 On 21 October 2015, Cabinet agreed to new arrangements for the storage and display of the DLI collection which included the storage of items at the Sevenhills facility and proposals for the loan of items to a number of venues including Palace Green Library, Bishop Auckland Town Hall, Spennymoor, Newton Aycliffe and Seaham.

- 4 This was part of an approach to widening the exposure of the history of the DLI to wider groups whilst also achieving medium term financial plan (MTFP) savings.
- 5 More substantive arrangements for a permanent display were agreed by Cabinet on 17 January 2018 where, as part of consideration of a report on the development of the Aykley Heads site as a Strategic Employment Site and the relocation of the DCC Headquarters to the city centre, the new History Centre development, which includes a permanent display for DLI collection, was agreed.
- 6 Subsequent to that report, further updates on the development of the History Centre have been considered by Cabinet on 17 October 2018 and 16 January 2019.
- 7 The new History Centre has a capital budget of £19.6 million for the renovation and the addition of an extension to the Grade II listed building where the centre will be located. Kier Construction Limited was awarded the contract following competitive procurement and commenced on site on in April 2021.
- 8 The Joint Administration is seeking to review the options for the future storage, care and display of the DLI collection. An options appraisal will be produced to include a full assessment of opportunities, costs, risks and other funding availability. This will also include an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre, with the outcome considered by Cabinet by September 2021.
- 9 Since the moving of the DLI Collection to Sevenhills, the former DLI Museum building has been vacant, and its future has yet to be determined. A full condition report will be developed, to understand the options available. Interim measures to improve the area will be undertaken.

Recommendation(s)

- 10 Cabinet is recommended to agree:
 - (a) that an options appraisal for the future display and storage of DLI collection is prepared; and
 - (b) that a further update report is provided to Cabinet by September 2021.

Background and Review of Storage and Display of DLI Collection

- 11 The Council agreed to build and operate a dedicated museum to the Durham Light Infantry Regiment and the creation of an Arts Centre at Aykley Heads in Durham in 1967. An agreement was made with the DLI Trustees that DCC would care for their heritage collection and create the museum. The DLI Trustees and other interested parties will be consulted as part of the review.
- 12 Prior to the museum being constructed, the collection had been at the DLI Depot at Brancepeth Castle and then temporarily stored at the Bowes Museum. Unlike the majority of regimental and corps museums, the DLI Museum was not funded by the Ministry of Defence.
- 13 In 2014 Cabinet agreed to review the opening hours and operation of the DLI museum and art gallery and MTFP savings of £105,000 were realised.
- 14 Cabinet agreed on 21 October 2015 to a number of recommendations in relation to the future display and storage of the DLI collection. MTFP savings of £241,000 were then factored into the budgets from 2016/17 from the closure of the museum and relocation of the DLI archives and collection.
- 15 The recommendations included the closure of the DLI museum on the Aykley Heads site and investment in appropriate storage and care and a loan strategy for display of the collection which would facilitate a wider audience being aware of the history of the DLI.
- 16 As part of the initial review of priorities and in setting the strategic direction of the Council for the next four years, it is proposed to review the options for the display, care and storage of the DLI collection.
- 17 The review will reconsider the options available for display, storage and care of the collection as well as any financial, legal and value for money issues associated with the options considered.

Conclusion

- 18 The Joint Administration is seeking to review the options for the future storage, care and display of the DLI collection. An options appraisal will be produced to include a full assessment of opportunities, costs, risks, other funding availability. This will also include an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre, with the outcome considered by Cabinet by September 2021.

Background papers

- Future DLI Museum Arrangements – Report to Cabinet 21 October 2015
- Aykley Heads Strategic Employment Site, DCC Headquarters Full Business Case and Future options for the County Archive – Reports to Cabinet 17 January 2018 (Part A and Part B reports);
- Durham History Centre Update – Report to Cabinet 17 October 2018
- Durham History Centre – Next Steps – Report to Cabinet 16 January 2019

Other useful documents

None.

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The report sets out a proposed review of the proposed arrangements for displaying and storing the DLI collection. Any legal implications of alternative uses will be set out in subsequent reports.

Finance

As with legal implications, the financial and value for money implications of any options will be set out in subsequent reports.

A capital budget of £19.6 million was established for the construction of the new History Centre with plans in place for a permanent exhibition of the DLI collection. Kier Property Developments Limited was awarded the contract following a competitive procurement exercise and commenced on site in April 2019.

In 2014/15 MTFP savings of £105,000 were achieved from a review of the opening hours and operation of the former DLI Museum at the Aykley Heads site. In 2016/17 further MTFP savings of £241,000 were achieved from the closure of the Museum and relocation of the DLI archives and collection.

Consultation

Not applicable at this stage, though there will be a need to engage with a range of stakeholders as part of the options appraisal

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable at this stage.

Climate Change

Not applicable at this stage but will be considered if any alternative options are considered in further detail.

Human Rights

Not applicable at this stage.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable at this stage.

Staffing

Not applicable at this stage at this stage but will be considered in future reports as required.

Accommodation

Not applicable at this stage but will be considered as part of consideration of future options.

Risk

Risk assessments of alternative options will need to be considered, including an impact assessment on the plans for the new History Centre. Risks will include financial and reputational risk assessments of each of the options considered.

Procurement

Not applicable at this stage but will be considered as part of consideration of future options.