

<b>Committee(s):</b> Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 21/09/2020
<b>Subject:</b> London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library consolidation	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Peter Lisley, Director of Major Projects	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Geoff Pick, Director, London Metropolitan Archives	

### Summary

This report outlines plans for the consolidation of London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to approve the consolidation of London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library as detailed in paragraphs 10-12.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. Guildhall Library (GHL) and London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) each have a long history as institutions and great interlocking strengths in their collections. These collections were jointly designated in 2005 by the then Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (the scheme is now administered by Arts Council England) as being of outstanding national significance.
2. Guildhall Library was founded in 1425 under the terms of the will of Lord Mayor Richard Whittington. It continued until 1549 when its entire collection was acquired by the Duke of Somerset but was re-established in 1828 as 'a Library of all matters relating to this City, the Borough of Southwark and the County of Middlesex'. LMA has both City and metropolitan London origins dating back over many centuries. The City Corporation's archives begin in 1067 and there were record keeping structures in place from the early Middle Ages. For metropolitan London those structures date from the sixteenth century with the Middlesex Sessions where the earliest local governmental archives date from 1549.
3. Until 2009 Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives operated independently within the then Libraries, Archives and Guildhall Art Gallery Department. Guildhall Library was historically divided into three sections – Prints and Maps, Printed Books and Manuscripts. In 2009 responsibility for the Manuscripts and Prints and Maps sections was transferred to LMA and the collections and staff, were merged into one service based at LMA's site in

Clerkenwell. This included the conservation service for both printed books and archives.

## **Current Position**

4. Since March 2018 Guildhall Library has been under the direction of the Director of London Metropolitan Archives and there has been a growing convergence of the two services since then with a much greater focus on the synergies between the collections. There are many areas where these reflect different aspects of the same subject, such as the history of crime and the rule of law in the capital; the Livery Companies; the food and drink industry; and family history. As an example, GHG staff have taken over responsibility for the LMA Library, a valuable if underused resource dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, and are making it much more accessible alongside the main GHG collections.
5. However, it has become clear that significant differences have built up over many years in the level of investment and development of the two sites, and services.
6. LMA at its Clerkenwell site has built modern purpose designed archive and library study areas with fully accredited security and access provision in place as well other respected facilities including digitisation and conservation studios. It is one of the most energy efficient buildings in the City Corporation and is regularly visited by national and international library and archive professionals researching examples of good practice. For Guildhall Library, there has been some development in the past twenty years with the creation of the John Stow event and exhibition area but broadly the public areas have not changed since the 1970s when the Library relocated there from the Old Library.
7. As regards services, Guildhall Library has developed good work in its wider engagement notably through innovative exhibitions and its social media work, which particularly during lockdown has been excellent. However, it has had very limited opportunities and capacity to bid for external funding to enhance this work and bring its rich collections to a wider audience. In comparison, LMA has an excellent track record over many years of successful and substantial grant bids to such organisations such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Wellcome Trust which have enabled it to undertake ground breaking work, for example with BAME and LGBTQ+ communities. These grants have also enabled LMA to enhance its digital offer significantly.
8. It is also the case that for the research community, having printed and archive materials on the same subject or even from the same organisation accessed through two different sites and systems is neither the most efficient nor effective.

## **Options**

9. There would clearly be an option to leave the present arrangement as it is and inevitably there would be some longstanding Guildhall Library users who would prefer not to move to Clerkenwell for research or for events. No change would also see the Library remain in Guildhall with which it has historical links.

However, it is unlikely that it would be able overcome the issues outlined in paragraphs 6-8 in the current national and local financial climate and there are risks that it would have to restrict its current services. There are significant benefits in a consolidated service based on the Clerkenwell site as the best way to deliver good research services for the public and to generate a coordinated vision that will make the most of the collections and the strengths of the staff teams. Proposals for this are laid out in the following paragraphs.

## **Proposals**

10. It is proposed that there should be two phases for the consolidation of LMA and GHL, focused on LMA's site in Clerkenwell

### **11. Phase 1**

- a) Public access to the collections of both services will be made available at LMA's site in Clerkenwell from 1 April 2021.
- b) Key GHL collections required for reference and immediate access will be transferred to LMA by that date. There is some storage capacity at LMA but the majority of GHL's collections will need to remain at Guildhall for the time being, as indeed will the 10km of LMA collections stored in West Wing, North Block and GYE.
- c) From 1 April 2021 the primary base for GHL and LMA staff will be at LMA. As many collections will remain at Guildhall, staff from both services will need to have access to and work on them there and will require some office space to do so. Material from both services will continue to be used for exhibitions in the Guildhall complex, primarily the Heritage Gallery and Guildhall Yard, and staff will continue to work closely with other departments there.

### **12. Phase 2**

- a) By the end of March 2021 a long-term plan will be developed for the future role of the consolidated service which will be submitted to Members for approval. The plan will include:
  - i. A vision for the service which will build on the strengths of the collections and the staff e.g. around profile and wider areas for engagement and partnership. This will be able to acknowledge the City's commitment to its leading role in safeguarding London's history over many centuries, from caring for its earliest written record since 1067, through the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 of the foundation of Guildhall Library to the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026 of the City taking responsibility for the archives of metropolitan London from the Greater London Council.
  - ii. An accommodation review to cover the long-term future of the Clerkenwell site, including the service's role supporting the City's commitment to working

closely with the London Borough of Islington, in which it is based. This will also include the potential to consolidate the collections in Clerkenwell. There is no existing capacity for the whole of them to be relocated from Guildhall (they comprise some 14km of material) but there is the potential to build more storage capacity on site and/or repurpose space currently let to commercial tenants. This would not be inexpensive but would also release a considerable amount of space on the Guildhall estate.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

13. It specifically supports the following outcomes of the City's Corporate Plan:  
Outcome 3: *people have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential*  
Outcome 7: *we are a global hub for innovation in finance and professional services, commerce and culture*  
Outcome 9: *we are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive*  
Outcome 10 *we inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration*
14. The City's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the 2010 Equality Act have been addressed and it is not considered that these proposals would disadvantage either protected groups or people more generally from an equality perspective. Conversations with existing users of both services will be conducted to address any questions or issues arising from consolidation.

## **Implications**

15. The proposed changes for GHM and LMA do not require any additional funding and are achievable within their current local risk budgets. They would be in place by the end of the current financial year and further developments would be approached within factors such as the City's medium-term financial planning. The opportunity to reduce the physical footprint of the service in Guildhall could support wider City consideration of its overall space requirements and the development of the Guildhall estate.

## **Conclusion**

16. Guildhall Library and London Metropolitan Archives have outstanding collections that together provide an unrivalled resource on the history of London. Developing them as a single coordinated service will provide a much more effective research environment and greater opportunities for wider engagement with the public.

## **Appendices**

None

### **Geoff Pick**

Director, London Metropolitan Archives

T: 020 7332 3833

E: [geoff.pick@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.pick@cityoflondon.gov.uk)