

Committee(s): Finance Committee – For decision Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For information	Dated: 07/05/2024 20/05/2024
Subject: Future of London Metropolitan Archives Contingency Funding	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Diverse Engaged Communities; Vibrant Thriving Destination; Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£150,000
What is the source of Funding?	Finance Committee Contingency (City Fund)
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Y
Report of: Deputy Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Emma Markiewicz, London Metropolitan Archives; Fiona McKeith, City Surveyors	

Summary

London Metropolitan Archives currently occupies a rental property on which the lease will expire in 2035. The scale of the collection and the risk of hugely increased rental costs make it imperative that we explore new accommodation options and business models at pace. Given the scale of the collection, any move will require up to seven years planning. A key driver is the likely increase of rental costs from the current £0.25m up to £4m. Alongside this, complex, legal and reputation matters require clarifying and managing.

Following a discussion at the Efficiency and Performance Working Party on 18th April 2024 (the presentation is available as a background paper on request), Members expressed support for a report to be provided to the Finance Committee seeking approval for funding to push ahead with the relevant research and development work to understand capital costs for the premises options costed at £150k.

The following key work strands are to be undertaken:

- define LMA’s strategic operating model and develop LMA’s existing and potential income generation opportunities
- undertake a site search and options analysis

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve a budget of £150,000 from Finance Committee, City Fund contingency to enable the relevant research and development work to be undertaken at pace, and to help identify the next steps for the future accommodation of the London Metropolitan Archives

Main Report

Background

About London Metropolitan Archives

1. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) is one of the finest city archives in the world and it is owned, funded, and managed by the City of London Corporation. It is the second largest archive of its kind in the UK and is responsible for 100km of the Capital's documentary heritage originating from a variety of different organisations including the City of London Corporation, the former Greater London Council (GLC) and its predecessor organisations including the London County Council (LCC), and the Middlesex County Council (MCC). Its collection has a designation of outstanding national importance, and individual iconic documents have been accepted onto the UNESCO Memory of the World UK register.
2. As well as a growing records repository (which is expanding at a rate of 0.5km annually), the archive is a public research centre which allows the LMA to play an important civic role in sharing the stories of London and its communities through collaboration, innovation and learning.
3. The LMA collection is currently split across two sites: approximately 90% is held at 40 Northampton Road in Islington, and the remaining 10% is held in the Guildhall, in the heart of the City of London.
4. Annually around 25 million users access the LMA's online resources, and over 25,000 visitors visit the archive on Northampton Road.
5. We are a centre of expertise and knowledge, and we strive to connect people with their history through the collections in a wide range of ways:
 - **Research and enquiry services:** our reading rooms are open to the public, free of charge, 4 days a week, and 1 Saturday a month.
 - **Digital resources:** including the highly regarded London Picture Archive which provides free access to over 250,000 historical prints, maps and photographs of London; our extensive online catalogue and records available via partners such as Ancestry.com.
 - **Public engagement:** Exhibitions and events programme on site, in external locations and online - talks, workshops and webinars.
 - **Education and Learning programme:** We aim to bring 2 school groups to our site per day delivering high quality, curriculum linked sessions to KS1, 2, 3 and 4.
 - **Community engagement:** working with local charities and depositors to exploit their collections for their needs, and to make our spaces available to them; delivering grant-funded programmes with partners such as National HIV Stories Trust.
 - **Volunteering opportunities:** to improve and enhance our catalogue. LMA currently has around 100 volunteers who contribute both remotely and onsite to improving our find aids and supporting events.
 - **Being the City Corporation's memory:** using our collections and expertise to bring to life its history, to explain its ancient customs and

practices, and to enhance the experience of visitors, members and colleagues.

Current Position

6. A feasibility study of the current premises was undertaken in 2023 to understand the capacity and constraints of the site. This identified key issues that required addressing with some urgency given the size of the collection, 100km of archiving, and the programme timeframe in the event that a move is required.
7. The key drivers in respect to the critical need to prepare a Strategic Vision for the future of LMA are:
 - The lease on our current site in Islington ends in 2035.
 - LMA is estimated to reach its current spatial capacity within the next 9 years and during this period the continued growth of our collections will result in mounting operational pressure.
 - A need to enable a more robust and expansive income opportunities such as commercial storage for archives services, which could be realised by increased capacity.
 - As part of the Corporation's culture offer and Destination City strategy, we want to capitalise on opportunities to grow an increasingly ambitious public facing role and outreach offer. LMA therefore require improved front of house facilities and increased public visibility within London.
8. Each of these drivers is prefaced by LMA's mission to remain one of the leading archive services in the UK and to provide leadership within the London, national, and international archive sectors.

Options

9. The current lease ends in 2035 (11 years' time) and it is not known whether the landowner would agree to a lease extension or sale of the freehold, and if so on what terms. Their position on this will be a significant determinant on the preferred option for the future. In any event the lease position requires a decision to be taken on the future of LMA.
10. The current lower rent of c£250k is geared to 7.35% of the market rental value stipulated in original 1979 lease agreement. We understand this is due to the COL having invested in the site and that the lease will revert to market value in 2035.
11. There are several options for the future operating model and location/s of LMA, however all will carry a significant increase in expenditure. The options include:
 - a. Do nothing- The City of London Corporation currently spends £4.1m each year for LMA to care for its collections and facilitate public access. The market rent forecasts for the site from 2035 is estimated around £4.6m based on indicative market rental figures. A new lease would need to be negotiated with the landowner by 2028.

- b. Move (within the City of London)-relocate the collection away from the Northampton Road site, in a single new site or a split-site model, using existing space in the City. Forecast rent c.£4,6m.
- c. Move (front end within the City of London and model different proportions of the collection being stored outside including Greater London and facilities beyond). Forecasts c£3m to c£5.3m.

Proposals

12. We are seeking funds to secure consultancy support to deliver a package of research: -:

Activity	Budget	Department
A Vision and Brief Define and design the future LMA strategic operating model including develop existing and potential income generation opportunities, - examine the market options for professional, commercial storage for archival collections of other London boroughs, institutions and businesses; identify all respective costs- capital/revenue/decant/legal etc	£70,000	LMA
B Site Search and Options Analysis Subject to the above brief, undertake a site search; model proportions of the collection that need to be retained in central London, alongside what could be located in an off-site facility, and associated costs	£70,000	LMA and CS
C Current site Undertake an external market valuation to explore a hybrid option of staying on the existing site (CS QMS requires this valuation to be undertaken externally) -	£10,000	CS

13. LMA requires an external resource with international archiving expertise to inform the future most viable model, and thereafter the respective space requirements.

14. The City Surveyor (CS) can only undertake a site search and support with analysis until the above brief is generated and supported. The CS does not have sufficient resourcing to undertake the activities stated above and requires consultancy support with relevant expertise.

15. On securing a budget, a GW1/2 will be provided to the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee and Resource Allocation Sub-Committee to approve the project and expenditure. It should be noted that this initial £150k will only enable the first stage of this project. A further c.£200k will be required to deliver a fully informed options analysis at a GW3 for the purposes of decision making. The expectation is that a GW2 Issue report will report on the first stage and provide a recommendation which then would be taken forward requiring architectural multi-disciplinary team alongside, commercial and legal support given the legal implications highlighted below in section 19. A GW3

decision is required by 2026 to safeguard the continued operation of the LMA and mitigate the risks outlined below and in slide 9 of Appendix 1.

Corporate & Strategic Implications –

16. Strategic implications – The archive is a significant asset – the second biggest archive in the UK. Over many years, the Corporation has collected the records of pan London governing bodies including the GLC, Middlesex County Council and London County Council. There are no existing organisations who would re-home these collections. There is a real opportunity to develop a world-renowned archive and research centre for London, to consider new models for deposit which could grow income, and to consider the possibilities for commercial storage. We have also presented some cost indications of holding different proportions of the material off site.
17. Financial implications – There is no ‘do nothing’ option – even the option of staying in our current location with no further development (should we get agreement from the Landlord) incurs a significant rent increase.
18. Resource implications – As noted in section 12,13,14
19. Legal implications – Around 30% of the collection is covered by the Local Government Act 1972, and relates to City Collections and includes CoL, Greater London Council, London Residuary Body, Inner London Education Authority, London County Council, Middlesex County Council. The Local Government Act 1972 requires local authorities to ‘make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council of any of their officers’. It also gives power to a local authority to make provision for access to records and to promote their use, but also to acquire records which are in local interest. In the case of the Common Council of the City of London ‘local interest’ is construed as the whole of Greater London.

In the case of the GLC, for example, the London Residuary Body (LRB – created to wind up the GLC) has a transfer act (The London Residuary Body (Transfer of Property etc) Order 1990), which includes the transfer of records from the LRB to the City, with a payment of £1.52 million (£4 million approx. with inflation) for ‘accommodation’ of the records the LRB had possession of.

Around 7% of the collection is covered by the Public Record Act - LMA is a designated Place of Deposit which means we are delegated on behalf of HMG to hold Public Records of Local Interest. This relates to records including courts coroners and hospitals

The remaining c. 60% is collected and housed on the basis of around 500 separate depositor agreements built up over decades, with bodies who may or may not still exist, who have deposited material with the Corporation in perpetuity. These include businesses, livery companies, Church of England and many other organisations, charities and individuals who have a strong connection to London.
20. Risk implications – as above
21. Equalities implications – an EQIA will be undertaken at GW3

22. Climate implications – Consideration will be given to the CoL Corporate Climate Action targets throughout the feasibility stages.
23. Security implications – n/a

Conclusion

20. The timing of the end of the existing lease, the archive capacity limit and the time it would take the move the collection means that the future location of the LMA needs to be decided in the next two years. The funds to undertake the relevant research and development work for a detailed options appraisal will ensure we are in a position to present members with some meaningful options for the future of the archives service.

Background Paper

Presentation to Efficiency and Performance Working Party on 18th April 2024

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