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| Committee: | Date: |
| Gresham (City Side) Committee | 4 May 2018 |
| Finance Committee | 8 May 2018 |
| Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee – <i>for information</i> | 14 May 2018 |
| Subject: Gresham Music Collection Conservation | Public |
| Report of: Town Clerk | For Decision |
| Report authors: Greg Moore – Principal Members' Services & Committee Manager Peter Ross – Principal Librarian, Guildhall Library | |

Summary

At the February 2018 meetings of the Gresham (City Side) and Joint Grand Gresham Committees, discussion took place in relation to the Gresham Music Collection, elements of which were considered to be in urgent need of repair or restoration work. This Collection is housed in the Guildhall Library, where it has been held on deposit since 1958.

It was observed that there existed a legal liability on the City Corporation and Worshipful Company of Mercers to maintain the Collection and both Sides were supportive of a feasibility study being undertaken to ascertain the activities and costs associated with restoring and preserving the items within the Collection. This work has now been undertaken and the costs of restoring those items in most immediate need of attention has been identified. This report proposes the allocation of funding required to undertake these works and notes the position in respect of the remainder of the Collection. It also outlines future activities which will be proposed in relation to the long-term conservation of the Collection as a whole.

Recommendation

Members of the **Gresham (City Side) Committee** are asked to:

- approve the approach to restoration works outlined in the report, subject to the concurrence of the Worshipful Company of Mercers and the Joint Grand Gresham Committee;
- approve the approach to Finance Committee for an allocation of £18,477 to pay for the immediate works necessary to restore the priority works within the Gresham Music Collection, subject to the concurrence of the Worshipful Company of Mercers and the Joint Grand Gresham Committee; and
- note that the total cost of the works is £36,954, with £18,477 to be funded each from the City Corporation and the Worshipful Company of Mercers.

Members of the **Finance Committee** are asked to approve the allocation of £18,477 from Finance Contingency to pay for the immediate works necessary to restore the priority works within the Gresham Music Collection (noting that the total cost of the works is £36,954, with £18,477 to be funded each from the City Corporation and the Worshipful Company of Mercers).

Main Report

Background

1. Originally put together by Edward Taylor, who was appointed Gresham Professor of Music in 1837, the Gresham Music Collection belongs to Gresham College but has been on deposit at Guildhall Library since 1958.
2. In 1959, the City Corporation, in conjunction with The Worshipful Company of Mercers, formally agreed to be the custodian of the Gresham Music Collection, with any costs as deemed necessary to be executed by the Gresham Committee. The details of this agreement concerning the custodianship of the Collection were set out within the 6 January 1959 Agreement between the Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of the City of London and the Joint Grand Gresham Committee, appended to this report.
3. The Collection is insured under the City Corporation's general insurance for library items (see: report to Gresham (City Side) Committee, October 2015). However, elements within the collection have been identified as in urgent need of restoration and repair.
4. To honour this responsibility, the Gresham (City Side) Committee agreed that a feasibility study should be produced by the Principal Librarian, clearly setting out a breakdown including costs of what was immediately necessary (i.e. to save those works/items that required immediate attention to stop them deteriorating beyond repair), and what was desirable (i.e. to return the totality of the Collection into acceptable condition).

The Collection

5. The most important single items within the Collection are probably the very early copy of Thomas Tallis's *Spem in Alium*, which is regarded as one of the most important copies of Tallis's work in existence, and the Purcell Autograph manuscript, which is an anthology of 48 songs, all but the last three in Purcell's hand.
6. Much of the rest of the collection remains undiscovered, despite it having many significant manuscripts – these make up the majority of those which the Principal Librarian has assessed as needing very urgent attention. They include autograph manuscripts by John Blow (1649–1708), choirmaster at St Paul's Cathedral, and an annotated copy of Handel's *Messiah* from which the famous 18th Century soprano Gertrude Mara sang. This volume also has autograph notes by Dr Samuel Arnold (1740 – 1802), who was both a composer and the publisher of the collected works of Handel.
7. An expert, previously commissioned to survey the collection from the point of view of creating a detailed catalogue to international music manuscript cataloguing standards (RISM), wrote the following:

“Regarding the nature of the collection, apart from the gems that are already well-known in the collection (for example the autograph manuscript by Purcell) the examination revealed important provenance information for some of the volumes examined. For example, one volume was found to have been in the possession of the important eighteenth-century collector Thomas Bever (1725-

1791) (MS 368). The collection also contains several volumes that bear the same bookplate, forming thus separate sub-collections within the Gresham collection. Recording this information could reveal important information about former owners and the history of the manuscripts before they entered the Library of Gresham College. By including the records in the RISM database such provenance information will reunite important collections dispersed in various libraries in the UK and abroad on one database.

Apart from the strong presence of English composers and manuscripts, the collection also contains several Italian manuscripts, some of which may have been purchased abroad by their first owners in lack of a strong publishing tradition in such countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. As well as their musical value such volumes shed important light on aspects of musical taste, and reception history of particular repertoire in Britain. The cataloguing of the collection will therefore shed important light on social history in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London and Britain before the manuscript volumes entered the Library of Gresham College, as well as provide a useful resource for the study of musical taste and life at the College."

Restoration and Repair

8. Following the February Gresham (City Side) and JGGC meetings, the Principal Librarian has met with the City Corporation's Conservation Studio Manager to discuss prioritisation of works and to provide the requested breakdown of costs, both in respect of works that are immediately necessary (i.e. to save those works/items that need immediate attention to stop them deteriorating beyond repair), and which are desirable (i.e. to get the totality of the collection into acceptable condition).

Priority Works

9. To save those works which need immediate attention, the Conservation Studio Manager has detailed the hours required to work on each volume and estimated for materials, boxing, and so on. The total hours add up to nine months' work for a mid-scale grade D conservator (calculated to include annual leave, sick leave and other contingencies). Costings are as follows:

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| Salary for a grade D conservator: | £34154 |
| Materials: | £2000 |
| Boxes to be made: | £800 |
| Total costs: | £36954 |

10. Should approvals for the funding of this project be obtained before the end of May, it might prove possible to extend the contract of one of the existing conservator already employed on fixed term contracts and currently working on other projects. This would save the costs of recruitment and the individual would not need to spend the first part of the contract being brought up to speed on systems of working and other induction items. It has been confirmed that all current postholders have the requisite skills necessary for the Gresham Music project.
11. Should it prove necessary to recruit a wholly new member of staff, the figure shown above would need to increase by a small percentage to allow for recruitment, initial management costs, and so on.

(i) Desirable Works

12. The costs and level of activity required to get the totality of the collection into acceptable condition is a much more difficult question to answer. There are more than 700 volumes of history, travel, biography and more from the sixteenth century onwards that formed part of the original Gresham College deposit. On the whole, these have been assessed as being less historically important than the music volumes and, for the most part, in a better condition. The Principal Librarian has confirmed that they could indeed carry out a survey of the remainder of this collection, but this would require some time and he is anxious not to delay the more urgent part of the project whilst this is completed.

(ii) Ongoing Maintenance

13. As well as requesting the aforementioned feasibility study, Members also asked that an assessment be produced of what would be required to maintain the collection on an ongoing basis.
14. The Principal Librarian has suggested that only when stages (i) and (ii) of the restoration project have been completed could he calculate a realistic figure in respect of ongoing costs.
15. However, he is confident that, having completed the necessary work on all the material, the annual costs would be quite low. Once stabilised, stored and consulted in a controlled environment (such as Guildhall Library), there should only be a limited necessity for further significant intervention.
16. It is believed that the serious problems of the Gresham Music Collection were sustained before the collections were deposited at the Library: Guildhall Library has many collections of a similar age and level of use, yet their condition has remained stable with none of the problems across the board that one finds in the Gresham Music Collection.

Proposal

17. It is therefore proposed that approval be given to the allocation of £18,477 to fund the immediate works necessary to restore the priority works within the Gresham Music Collection (£18,477 each from the City Corporation and the Mercers' Company, totalling £36,954).
18. Once this work is underway, it is suggested that the Principal Librarian be asked to undertake a survey of the rest of the collection to ascertain the costs of restoring the other elements of the Collection, following which, a separate bid for funding can be made.
19. Members previously suggested that future consideration might be given to the more general issue of displaying the Collection in due course, with a reference made to a variety of options such as the London Metropolitan Archives and the new Museum of London. It is proposed that this be considered once restoration works are complete, alongside a proposal relating to the resource requirements associated with ongoing conservation to prevent the Collection falling into disrepair again in future.

Conclusion

20. Members are therefore asked to approve funding of £18,477 to pay for the immediate works necessary to restore the priority works within the Gresham Music Collection (noting that a contribution of £18,477 would come from each of the City Corporation and the Mercers' Company, totalling a spend of £36,954). You are also asked to note that further reports, concerned with the restoration of the remainder of the Collection and arrangements for its future display and care, will be presented in due course.

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