

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Gresham (City Side) Committee	29 October 2021
Joint Grand Gresham Committee	29 October 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Gresham Collection Conservation: Update on Restoration Activity	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>7, 10</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£71,509 total (£35,754.50 per Side)</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report authors:</b> Greg Moore – Town Clerk's Department 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 particularly urgent need of repair or restoration work. This Collection is housed in the Guildhall Library, where it has been held on deposit since 1958. A feasibility study was undertaken to ascertain the activities and costs associated with restoring and preserving the items within it. Subsequent to the completion of the feasibility study, approval was obtained in May 2018 for funds to undertake restoration and repair works.

The restoration works on the Music Collection have now been completed, as reported to your Committee in February 2021. At that meeting, Members expressed a desire to understand the likely costs and level of activity required to undertake similar restoration activity for the remainder of the Collection (more than 700 volumes of history, travel, biography and other items, dating from the sixteenth century onwards).

The Principal Librarian has now undertaken a thorough survey to verify the condition of the items within the Collection and their suitability for display and consultation, as well as an estimate of costs associated with any repair and restoration activities. This report sets out the findings of this survey for Members' information.

### Recommendation

That:-

1. The findings of the Collection survey be noted.
2. Members consider whether they would wish to progress a bid for funding for the restoration of the remainder of the Collection.
3. Should Members wish to proceed with a funding bid, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chair, to produce a bid report for onwards submission to the relevant committee(s).

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Gresham Collection belongs to Gresham College but has been on deposit at Guildhall Library since 1958. 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.
2. Around one-third of the items in the Collection are music pieces and were for the most part collected together by Edward Taylor, who was appointed Gresham Professor of Music in 1837. This portion of the Collection (known as the Gresham Music Collection) contains the most historically significant and rare items. The remaining two-thirds (some 719 pieces) comprise various history, travel, biography, and other works.
3. In 1959, the City Corporation, in conjunction with The Worshipful Company of Mercers, formally agreed to be the custodian of the Collection, with any costs as deemed necessary to be executed by the Gresham Committee. The Collection is insured under the City Corporation's general insurance for library items (see: *report to Gresham (City Side) Committee, October 2015*).
4. Elements within the Music Collection were identified as in urgent need of restoration and repair and, as a consequence, it was 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).
5. At the May 2018 Gresham (City Side) and Joint Grand Gresham Committee (JGGC) meetings, the Principal Librarian presented an assessment of the prioritisation of works and a breakdown of costs.
6. To save those works which needed most immediate attention to prevent irretrievable loss, it was calculated that the equivalent of nine months' work for a mid-scale Grade D conservator (calculated to include annual leave, sick leave and other contingencies) would be required, at a cost of £36,954. Approval was therefore sought and obtained for these monies, to allow the works to proceed.
7. An experienced Book Conservator was appointed to repair and house the manuscripts from the Gresham Music Collection, with work commencing 17 September 2018 and completing Christmas 2020 (completion having been delayed due to COVID-19 related issues).
8. The completion was reported in February 2021, when Members expressed a desire to understand the likely costs and level of activity required to get the totality of the wider Collection into acceptable condition.
9. As mentioned, whilst around a third of the Collection are music pieces, there are also more than 700 volumes of history, travel, biography and more from the

sixteenth century onwards that formed part of the original Gresham College deposit and which make up the rest of the Collection. 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.

10. The Principal Librarian has now undertaken a survey of the remainder of this Collection, which is now presented for Members' review at Appendix 1.

### **Current Position and Proposal**

11. It had previously been reported that the non-music part of the Collection was, in general, in better condition than the Music collection. This remains true, as the total needing repair is a smaller percentage than was found in the Music Collection.
12. From the entire remaining Collection (of 719), 105 books have been identified as unfit for consultation / use, as this would cause further damage to the binding and the text-block. For the most part, damage is to the covers, spines, joints, and cap ends of the affected books.
13. To repair the identified 105 volumes would, it is estimated, require 16 months, employing a full-time conservator on a fixed-term contract (the 16 months includes annual leave and potential sick leave of up to 10 days). The salary (including on-costs) for a suitably qualified Grade D conservator currently stands at £68,767. Cost for materials is estimated as £2,285 plus VAT, resulting in an overall estimated cost of £71,509.
14. Costs for such items in the care of the Joint Grand Gresham Committee are customarily apportioned on an equal basis between the City Corporation and the Worshipful Company of Mercers. This would equate to costs of £37,754.50 each.
15. Should Members of both Sides, through discussion at JGGC, determine that they would wish to pursue the wider repair works, then they would need to seek relevant funding approvals via their respective internal approval processes.
16. On the City Side specifically, officers would engage with the Chamberlain to identify potential funding sources and take steps to submit a request for monies. The most likely funding sources would be the contingency funds under the control of either the Policy & Resources or Finance Committee.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

- **Financial Implications** – should Members wish to pursue the matter then a formal bid would need to be drawn up and a suitable funding source identified. Assuming the usual 50/50 allocation of costs between the Corporation and Mercers, this would equate to £35,754.50 each. This sum exceeds the available balance within the Committee's contingency fund and, consequently, a bid would need to be made to the Policy & Resources or Finance Committee for an allocation from another contingency fund.
- **Resource Implications** – as outlined in paragraph 13, to undertake any works would require the appointment of a dedicated book conservator for a 16-month period.

- **Equalities Implications** – none.
- **Climate Implications** – none.
- **Risk Implications** – it is unlikely that any decision to not proceed with the restoration would cause the books to deteriorate further, although this would only be the case if the volumes are not produced for consultation or used in exhibitions (thereby limiting their utility from a research or educational perspective). There is, however, a risk that any delay in undertaking the works will lead to increased salary costs to complete the work in future, given inflationary pressures and the upwards trends of salaries in general.
- **Legal Implications** – none.

### **Conclusion**

17. Having concluded restoration works to the Music portion of the Gresham Collection, the condition of the remainder of the Collection has now been assessed. Members are asked to note the outcomes of the Principal Librarian's survey thereof, together with the estimated costs and activity required to undertake repair works. Noting this, Members are asked to consider further whether they would wish for efforts to be made to progress this activity.

### **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1** – Gresham Collection Condition Report (Principal Librarian's Survey)

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