

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 7 December 2015**

Wards: All

**Subject: Heritage Strategy 2015 - 2020**

Lead officer: Simon Williams

Lead member: Councillor Nick Draper

Contact officer: Anthony Hopkins

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**Recommendations:**

- A. That Cabinet review and agree the Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 and its associated work plan.
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**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 sets out the borough’s commitment to promoting and enhancing its rich heritage. Underpinning the Strategy are four key themes:
1. Increasing the profile and public access to the borough’s unique and diverse cultural heritage;
  2. Safeguarding the borough’s varied heritage sites and resources;
  3. Making Merton’s heritage provision more inclusive and working collaboratively to widen public engagement and participation;
  4. Increasing funding and investment in Merton’s heritage through partnership work, external funding and sponsorship.
- 1.2. The first Heritage Strategy achieved a number of outcomes for the borough. Key achievements include increased collaboration work between heritage stakeholders, significantly increasing the amount of funding for heritage from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, and increasing access to our heritage through initiatives such as Merton Memories.
- 1.3. The Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 seeks to strengthen collaborative work further and has been devised with heritage stakeholders and in consultation with the voluntary and business communities. The Strategy seeks to address funding challenges by creating a more robust network of heritage enthusiasts and organisations.
- 1.4. Underpinning the objectives of the Heritage Strategy 2015 - 2020 is the work plan that represents the key heritage projects that are taking place across the borough. The delivery of the work plan will be monitored through newly convened Heritage Forum meetings.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. Merton can boast many heritage attractions, services and organisations dedicated to preserving and raising awareness of the borough's past. Service provision is divided between the local authority and a number of heritage organisations and community groups.
- 2.2. The local authority plays a key part in safeguarding and raising awareness of the rich heritage of Merton. Roles and responsibilities can be divided into three areas:
  - protection of the built and natural environment including policy development;
  - collecting and recording material associated with Merton's past and provision of a skilled information service;
  - promoting and increasing access to Merton's diverse cultural heritage through exhibitions, publications, the arts and education.
- 2.3. The local authority is responsible for preserving the historic character of the borough by ensuring that development of historic buildings or areas is sympathetic and makes a positive contribution to the borough's historic environment. This work is guided by the borough's Core Planning Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), which sets out government's policy on planning matters in England and Wales and highlights the need to understand the significance of the borough's built heritage.
- 2.4. It is proposed that the Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 is used as a supplementary document for the Local Development Framework for harnessing development and ensuring that it is sympathetic towards historic sites.
- 2.5. Key to the success of the new Heritage Strategy is increased collaborative working with the view to enhancing external investment into heritage to support economic development and to preserve our collective heritage. In a period when local authority spending continues to reduce we need to increase the way we work across the different sectors in the borough to deliver a shared, inclusive and cohesive plan.

## **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. **Do nothing**
- 3.2. This would lead to no new Heritage Strategy being devised and adopted. Heritage stake holders and community organisations would continue to deliver heritage projects in an ad hoc manner, which could lead to duplication and within a limited strategic context.
- 3.3. **Devise a local authority specific Heritage Strategy**
- 3.4. The first Heritage Strategy was devised in this manner and whilst a useful catalyst to reflect key local authority objectives and delivery it was not wholly representative of the work that some community organisations were

delivering. In difficult economic times the local authority's resources towards supporting heritage work is reducing and greater collaboration with the community will enable engagement and participation whilst tapping into other external funding sources.

#### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. The Heritage Strategy 2010 – 2014 has been reviewed through Heritage & Design Working Group meetings.
- 4.2. A thorough consultation exercise has been undertaken in devising the new Heritage Strategy and has been co-produced in conjunction with the local community. Consultation has taken place since September 2014 through the Heritage & Design Working Group and with wider community organisations including the voluntary and business communities.
- 4.3. The ongoing monitoring of the Strategy will be reviewed through the newly formed Heritage Forum, which will replace the current Heritage & Design Working Group. The work plan will be reviewed formally once a year with an opportunity to amend and include new activities. Further work will also be undertaken to make future Heritage Forums more inclusive and representative of our diverse communities.
- 4.4. The Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 has also been reviewed by the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel and comments have been reflected within the strategy.

#### **5 TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The work plan included in the Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 details the key projects to be undertaken with timeframes.

#### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There are no specific budgets assigned towards the delivery and implementation of the Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020. All activities will either be delivered within existing resources or where identified will seek to obtain external funding.
- 6.2. The London Borough of Merton has a finite amount of money to spend on heritage. Increasing participation in our heritage would increase community awareness and ownership of our shared heritage. The Heritage Strategy will act as strategic guidance for future heritage projects and it seeks to bring in significant amounts of external investment.
- 6.3. Current heritage resource is limited to 1FTE post of Heritage & Local Studies Centre Manager, a 0.5FTE Conservation Officer and the use of the second floor of Morden Library for the Heritage & Local Studies Centre.
- 6.4. The London Borough of Merton has no local authority run museums or archives although there is a rich resource of independent museums in the borough. Archive material relating to the London Borough of Merton is stored at the Surrey History Centre in Woking.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are no legal implications at this stage. In due course the Council will need to follow the statutory procedure in Part 5 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 including further public participation before the Strategy is formally adopted as a supplementary planning document under Regulation 14 of the 2012 Regulations.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. One of the key objectives in the Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020 is to increase participation and attendance in heritage activities amongst underrepresented groups. Underrepresentation is particularly prevalent amongst young people and BAME communities. The broadening of the role of future heritage meetings seeks to increase representation from these groups.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None identified.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. None identified.

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- Appendix 1 – Heritage Strategy 2015 – 2020