


Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Ann Hedges
Title	Disposal of Museum Resource Centre		 282202
Wards affected	Castle		

This report concerns the disposal of the Museum Resource Centre, 14 Ryegate Road

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To approve the disposal of the Museum Resource Centre (MRC), 14 Ryegate Road.
- 1.2 To approve the use of the capital receipt from this sale for the extension of the Museum Store at Heckworth Close to allow the move of the service
- 1.3 To delegate to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Regeneration the decision on the sale.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 The MRC houses a range of functions for the Museum Service but is no longer fit for purpose. Significant spend would be required to bring the building up to a standard for the service.
- 2.2 We have looked at a range of options for an alternative location for the services working in the building and have identified that our Museum Store at Heckworth Close can be extended at a reasonable cost to accommodate these and providing more modern working conditions for our staff.
- 2.2 The building is in a very sought after location next to the park and has views over the Castle, making it attractive to developers.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 To not sell the building, however the building will be surplus to operational requirements
- 3.2 To keep the building and redevelop ourselves. While this option could be delivered it has been agreed that the capital receipt from the sale will be available for the relocation of the services currently in the building and this would then be unaffordable
- 3.3 The capital receipt could be used for a range of other purposes however this would mean the move would not be possible

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The MRC houses a number of Museum functions as well as providing storage for some of our collections. The building now needs significant work to bring it up to standard

- 4.2 Previous bids for external funding to help us to move out have not been successful and we have been looking for an alternative solution to enable the move but all have proved to be much more expensive
- 4.3 There are a number of challenges as the building houses a number of Museum functions, storage for some of our collections and limited access for the public to view items. However, having identified a solution the MRC becomes surplus to operational requirements.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 The proposals are to extend our current storage facility at Heckworth Close to provide modern office accommodation for the Museum's staff. In order to fund this we will move out of and dispose of the MRC.
- 5.2 At the same time we are looking at our collections and undertaking some rationalisation and intend to move some of our archaeological material that is almost never accessed to deep store in salt mines in Cheshire. It is common practise amongst Local Authorities to take this approach. This provides cost effective and environmentally safe storage for items we have a duty to retain but are rarely accessed. Access is available with twenty four hour notice
- 5.3 This will then allow us to reconfigure the storage at Heckworth Close to accommodate collections currently held at the MRC. This helps to consolidate collections that are not currently on display into a single place making it easier to manage and for the public to access, for example for research students
- 5.4 A competitive tendering exercise will be undertaken to identify an agent to market the building
- 5.5 Colchester Borough Homes has agreed to take on the project management role in the design and build of the expansion of Heckworth Close, with the construction company to be appointed by competitive tender. This will enable us to keep the cost of the works to a realistic minimum.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The proposals support a number of strategic plan priorities:
- Make more of Colchester's great heritage and culture so that more people can enjoy them
 - Promote Colchester to attract further inward investment

7. Consultation

- 7.1 N/A

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 There is likely to be public interest in the sale of the building and press releases will be made at appropriate points of the sale.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 The capital receipt from the sale will be used to pay for the extension of Heckworth Close. If this is above the cost needed for the extension then the excess will be returned to the Capital Programme. A sum from the New Homes Bonus has also been allocated to the extension of Heckworth Close
- 9.2 Disposing of the MRC will mean no ongoing revenue costs and will mean the maintenance costs will not be incurred.
- 9.3 There will be a small cost to the deep salt mine storage but this will be covered by the revenue saving from the disposal. Overall we expect the changes to be revenue neutral at worst and possibly deliver a small saving.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 The MRC is not fully accessible and the extension to Heckworth Close will comply with all appropriate (Disability) regulations.
- 10.2 No other implications have been identified at this stage

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 N/A

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 N/A.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 N/A

Background Papers

N/A