

1. Introduction

Just over a year ago, the two councils of Colchester and Ipswich came together in a partnership arrangement that combined their respective museum services under a new organisation called Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service. This was a brave decision, as both towns had museum services with long and proud histories and museum collections and buildings of outstanding importance.

Through the external consultation that was undertaken in the run up to creating the joint service some serious, and fully understandable, doubts were expressed. However, following the formation of the new combined organisation the benefits of the partnership have clearly been demonstrated and most of the doubters have been fully won over. This has been fully reflected in the consultation that has been undertaken in relation to this current plan. Not a single respondent has proposed a reversion back to separate museum services or even questioned the benefits of the current arrangement. The majority have, in fact, applauded the success of the new service and given their clear support and encouragement to the partnership continuing into the future.

It has also been interesting to note the interest that there has been from other councils across the country and it is clear that some others are already considering following the bold example of Colchester and Ipswich.

The first year has undeniably seen some challenges and people have had to adjust to new ways of working and thinking, but there have been notable success and rapid improvements. A year on it is overwhelmingly clear that working in partnership has produced a stronger museum service, in both Colchester and Ipswich, and that this has only brought benefits to both Councils and the communities that they serve and that we now look forward to an exciting future and the opportunities that working together brings.

Joint Statement from Ipswich Borough Council & Colchester Borough Council

2. Vision and Values

Our Vision is that:

- ***We will provide a museum service that acts as a source of pride, inspiration and fun, for all the diverse people who live in and visit Colchester and Ipswich, and one that is recognised as among the best in the country and a role model for others.***

Underlying this vision is the following set of values:

- ***We believe that working together across Colchester and Ipswich, in equal partnership, can only be of benefit to both councils and communities.***
- ***We believe in valuing and utilising the wide variety of talents, perspectives and experiences of all staff in a cross-service style of working termed 'One-staff'.***
- ***We believe that collections, and the buildings in which they are displayed, are central to our purpose and it is our duty to care and preserve them for the benefit of current and future generations.***
- ***We believe that we have a vital role in unlocking and communicating the stories of the collections, buildings and histories that we hold, in trust, on behalf of the community.***
- ***We believe that it is essential to meaningfully engage with young people in ways that: positively impact on their learning; inspire them; help them develop and release talent and creativity; and promote feelings of self worth, pride and belonging.***
- ***We believe in delivering customer excellence and providing services that are inclusive and accessible to our diverse audiences.***
- ***We believe in the need for strong performance and financial management in order to ensure high standards and effective service delivery.***
- ***We believe that we have a responsibility to deliver and develop our services in as sustainable a manner as we can and, in doing so, act as an example to others.***
- ***We believe, while firmly adhering to core principles of fair access, in having a commercial approach that seeks to maximise income opportunities in order to be both cost effective and improve service delivery.***
- ***We believe in playing an active part in managing and caring for the wider human and natural heritage of the area.***
- ***We believe that supporting and working with the wider cultural community is not only our duty but also adds to the well-being of the organisation.***
- ***We believe that it is vital to take an outward looking perspective that proactively seeks partnership and funding opportunities.***
- ***We believe that it is important to strive to be innovative and to positively embrace change.***

3. Governance Framework

Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service

On 1st April 2007 'Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service' came into existence. It is a combination of the museum services of Colchester Borough Council and Ipswich Borough Council that up until that point had operated independently. The main objectives in creating the combined museum service, in summary, were to:

- Increase customer satisfaction and use
- Bring about step change improvement to museum services at Ipswich and further continue the development at Colchester
- Have an organisation that could react to challenges more effectively and quickly
- Increase the opportunities of partnership working and enhance the ability to lever in external funding
- Create more development opportunities for staff leading to improved job satisfaction and customer service
- Further the broader agendas of the parent bodies and others, such as that of the Haven Gateway Partnership
- Increase status and influence both regionally and nationally
- Lead to a reduction in the net cost of the combined service, through increased income and shared and more efficient use of resources

One year on it is possible to demonstrate progress and success in all of these areas.

Joint Museum Committee

In creating the new organisation it was important to establish precise details of the governance arrangements for the joint museum service. These were set out in a Joint Committee Agreement that was formally adopted by both Colchester Borough Council and Ipswich Borough Council (the agreement is attached as Appendix 1). In summary it sets out:

- The service level: strategic; Ipswich specific; and Colchester specific
- Funding arrangements
- Detailed governance arrangements, including the composition and areas of responsibility of a joint committee
- Clear safeguards in relation to the collections and buildings, with ownership remaining with the respective Local Authorities.
- Arrangements, including financial and staff responsibilities, in the event of a dissolution of the partnership

The Joint Committee is made up of two executive councillors from each of the partner Local Authorities. The committee's meetings are timed to allow critical decisions to be made that fit in with key organisational needs of both parent bodies, such as the annual budget setting process. The chair of the committee alternates, on an annual basis, between the two Councils and the meetings alternate between Colchester and Ipswich.

The majority of strategic decisions relating to the delivery and development of the museum service are now taken through the Joint Museum Committee. However, matters such as budget setting and some collections decisions are passed, with recommendations, to the respective Councils for formal endorsement.

Renaissance in the Regions

Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service along with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (as the lead partner), the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Luton Museums make up the East of England Museum Hub. The system of Hub museums was created as a result of a major review of museum provision in England, undertaken in 2001. The resulting report, *Renaissance in the Regions*, set out a very powerful vision for the future of English museums and resulted in the largest, sustained, investment in regional museums by central government that this country has seen.

When the Hub was originally created Colchester alone formed the fourth partner, but following the establishment of the joint museum service, on 1st April 2007, Ipswich is also now covered by Hub membership. This has already been of particular benefit at Ipswich allowing increased investment in some critical areas. The idea of the merged museum service was, in fact, in large part due to Renaissance in the Regions as it provided the context for cross service discussions. Representatives of the East of England Museum Hub and MLA East of England were invited, by Ipswich Borough Council, to take part in a peer review of Ipswich Museum Service and it was through this process that the idea of a joint museum emerged.

Due to funding limitations Renaissance was rolled out across the country in a phased approach leading to the creation of Phase 1 Hubs (with full funding by 2007/2008) and Phase 2 Hubs, which includes the East of England, with approximately 75% funding by 2007/2008. The financial year 2008/2009 in fact marks the beginning of a rebalancing of funding between Phase 1 and Phase 2 hubs that will be achieved over a three-year period. This redistribution of funding has resulted in a 7.3% increase in funding in the first year for the East of England. As a consequence of this the allocation to Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service is currently expected to rise from £706,000, the 2007/2008 level, to at least £720,000 for 2008/2009.

Being a Hub Museum, in receipt of such a significant amount of government funding, also has some implications in relation to governance. For instance, the service has to operate within an agreed business plan, setting out how the Renaissance funding will be spent, that is subject to scrutiny and approval by the board of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). In 2008/2009 an additional requirement has been introduced that the current business plan will have to be monitored, and any future ones approved, by a regional board which consists of the lead officers from the four Hub partners and representatives from the wider museum community. It is also important to note that a critical condition of Renaissance is that the funding should be used for additional work and should not be used as replacement for existing core funding. This is coupled with another requirement that the parent bodies must themselves sustain their own investment and, to date, the MLA has requested annual written statements confirming this.

Haven Gateway

Colchester Borough Council and Ipswich Borough Council form part of the Haven Gateway Partnership. The Haven Gateway Partnership covers four local authority districts (Colchester, Ipswich, Babergh, and Tendring) and provides a framework within which its partner organisations, from the private and public sectors, can work together to promote economic opportunities and secure the future prosperity of the region.

Operating within this framework offers a number of possibilities for Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service particularly in relation to the emerging Haven Gateway Cultural Strategy and the broader 'Living Spaces' strategy which have been developed and endorsed by the East of England's cultural and development agencies, including the Government Office (GO-East) and

the East of England Development Agency (EEDA). One of the aims of the 'Living Spaces' strategy is to identify key cultural initiatives that would be supported in a number of spatial groupings including the Haven Gateway. There is clearly an opportunity here for the museum service to have some of its ambitious development proposals, such as those for Colchester Castle and Ipswich Museum, figure in this strategy which could then have major benefits in helping to attract the necessary funding.

A Changing Environment

The museum service currently operates within an environment that is likely to see some significant changes. The way local government is organised is an area under particular scrutiny. Especially in Suffolk there are likely to be significant changes with the Boundary Commission delivering its recommendations in July 2008 for reorganised political arrangements in the county. The issue here for the museum service is to be adaptable, open to new ideas and new arrangements, and to enter constructively into discussions with all the relevant partner bodies. In doing this the emphasis will need to be on delivering the best outcomes for the communities that we serve and not simply preserving existing delivery mechanisms.

A fundamental review of Renaissance is also currently underway. This review will re-focus the national programme's strategy and priorities, possibly leading to substantial changes in 2009-2011. It will also allow the possibility of the recommendations of the national strategy for museums, which will be published shortly, to be incorporated. In the context of this review it is particularly important that the museum service continues to demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of the scheme and that the joint governing body continues to demonstrate its commitment to the scheme. It will also be necessary to demonstrate an ability and willingness to adapt to any changes.

At the time of the formation of the new museum service it was clear that neither Colchester nor Ipswich Borough Council were interested in pursuing other arrangements such as Trust status. While there is likely to be limited interest at present it may be worth, from time to time, revisiting this as an idea and particularly reviewing the pros and cons of such an arrangement in the light of changing circumstances. Certainly with the relatively large number of buildings now occupied by the service an 80%+ reduction on Non Domestic Rates begins to look more attractive. With some of the other changes that are happening more broadly, other benefits of a different governance arrangement may also emerge.

4. One-Staff

Staff Structure and Recruitment

The service is divided into seven teams with each of the team managers being a member of the museum management team. These teams are as follows: Business Support, Collections Management, Community History, Heritage, Learning and Marketing, Gallery Services – Colchester and Gallery Services – Ipswich. The members of the museum management team are based both in Colchester and Ipswich. All other staff are based either in Colchester or Ipswich. However, there are a number of staff, as well as the management team, who have responsibilities across the whole service. These include the Costume Curator, Senior Natural History Curator, Outreach Officer, Outreach Assistant, Marketing Officer, Access Officer and Senior Learning Officer.

The formation of the new organisation led to the creation of some new teams and significant expansion of others. This has also involved some individuals who have not had a tradition of working as part of a team on a regular basis. Consequently a particular emphasis, and area of investment, has been, and will continue to be, on fully establishing and sustaining an ethos of team working.

A particular strain, during the first year of the new museum service, has been caused due to the fact that it has not been possible to fill a number of vacant or new posts as fast as would have been liked. Also some posts, for budgetary reasons, have been designed to commence at the beginning of the second year of operation. These strains will however significantly ease as the posts are filled over the next few months, and these include: Art Curator (now in post), Assistant Natural History Curator, Archaeology Curator, Curatorial Assistant and Education Officer. All of these, apart from the latter, will be based at Ipswich.

From recent direct experience and from information gathered more widely there are some concerns over recruitment. In some areas, such as natural sciences, there does seem to be a skills shortage. There is also a particular issue over recruitment to more senior posts, as there does seem to be reluctance, among many in the profession, to take on management and leadership roles. Clearly a contributory factor here could be salary levels. In order to try and assess this, the Museums Association conducted a review of salary levels in the profession. One consequence of this was the annual publication of a set of salary guidelines. Though it is not felt that the services' salary levels are out of step with those generally in the museum profession, a thorough assessment against the MA guidelines will prove valuable in identifying if any remedial action is necessary and in ensuring that the service stays competitive, and thus continues to attract talented individuals.

Staff Development

Employees are an organisation's greatest asset and it is important that they are treated as such. It is especially important to invest in staff and provide appropriate development opportunities. This benefits the individual, but also the organisation and the sector as a whole. One of the ways that the museum service will do this is to actively encourage and support staff who are undertaking continuous professional development (CPD) within the frameworks created by relevant professional bodies such as the Museums Association and the Institute of Conservation. On a more strategic level, a training needs analysis and action plan will be produced covering the whole service. This will be an ongoing document that will be continually updated from individual performance development plans and as broader organisational needs are identified.

The issue over leadership skills has already been mentioned and consequently another particular area of focus will be to further develop such skills within the service. This will involve all members of the museum management team, but will also look to develop such skills in other parts of the organisation particularly through the MLA 'Future leaders' programme.

In developing any training and development opportunities it will be worth exploring partnership arrangements with other organisations in Essex, Suffolk and more widely. Many museums will be facing similar issues and a combined approach could potentially bring a range of benefits.

Communication

Good communication is very important in maintaining an effective and motivated organisation. This is a particular issue for the museum service operating, as it does, across two towns. Some good progress has been made in this area, such as ensuring all members of staff attend a regular team meeting, but there is still significant work to be done and further improvements are needed. The cross service style of project working that is embodied within the organisation helps in this respect as will other methods. This involves all major projects having direct representation from all parts of the organisation.

Another method that has been trialled by the organisation is the use of 'Diagonal Slice Teams'. These are set up to discuss a particular issue and involve a team that cuts across the organisational and hierarchical boundaries, and attempts to give all involved an equal voice and empowerment to express their views. Another potentially valuable method is the 'Buddy Scheme' in which members of staff are partnered with someone else, who they would not ordinarily work alongside. This has the objective of building deeper and longer lasting relationships and improving communication and understanding. It has initially been piloted at Colchester, with positive results, and it will now be revived and introduced across the whole service.

Workforce Diversity

It is healthy for an organisation to have a work force that reflects a range of experiences, perspectives and backgrounds and one that, in particular, reflects the cultural diversity of the community it serves. In the museum sector, nationally, this is recognised as a priority issue as it is clear that the work force is significantly under represented from among parts of the community. One of the ways the service will address this issue is to progress the actions of a Workforce Diversity Action Plan produced as part of the 2008/2009 Hub business plan. The service will also continue to support and participate in the national Diversify Scheme which seeks to bring more people from ethnic minorities into the profession. In particular the service will be the pilot host for the Bill Kirby Traineeship, a new scheme, about to be launched by the Museums Association, as an extension of the Diversify programme, which aims to increase the number of people with disabilities working in the museum sector.

Volunteers and Student Work Placements

The museum service provides regular opportunities for volunteers and work placements. Managed appropriately this brings clear benefits to the service. In particular it: represents excellent value for money, meets a clear customer demand, involves the local community in caring for their own heritage and supports the development of the wider profession. The intention within the service is to maintain this important function and over time look to further increase opportunities, though it is important that this is done in a sustainable way and only as increased staffing capacity allows. One area of particular focus will be to develop a strategy to offer work experience placements to students/adults with disabilities. In relation to the use of volunteers it is, however, important to stress that they will not be used to replace paid staff or used in roles that are more appropriate for paid staff.

5. Collections Care

Collections Development

The museum collections of Colchester Borough Council and Ipswich Borough Council are extensive and contain many items of outstanding importance both in national and international terms. At Colchester the archaeology collections are recognised as being of national significance under the Designation scheme and other particular highlights include the Penrose Collection of manuscripts and early printed books, and the Mason Collection of clocks. At Ipswich a particular highlight is the art collection especially in relation to the works of Constable and Gainsborough. Also of special importance are the 19th and early 20th century natural science collections, including the Ogilvie Bird Collection, and the ethnography collections, including Egyptian material.

The collections continue to be enriched through donation, purchase and field collection. All material is acquired in accordance with the museum's Collecting Policy. One key area for development of the Ipswich art collection in relation to collecting 20th century works will be to build on the existing collection of works by artists associated with the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing, centred around Cedric Morris, and the Ipswich Art School with the intention of becoming a major focal point in the study and presentation of the works of the artists associated with the two schools. Artists already represented in the collection include Cedric Morris, Maggi Hambling, Lucy Harwood, Joan Warburton, Glyn Morgan, Leonard Squirrel, Lawrence Self, Bernard Reynolds and Colin Moss. The intention will be to strengthen further the holdings of these artists and to fill identified gaps with other relevant artists' works. In contrast, the development of 20th century art works for the Colchester collection will continue to focus on the works of local print makers.

There is also a need for museums to continue to develop their collections so that they reflect contemporary society. There is a possibility, because of pressure on resources, particularly storage, that many museums will stop actively collecting material representative of contemporary society and this is something the service will need to address. There is also a need to ensure that the collections are expanded in areas where there has traditionally been an under representation, such as items related to disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation. These so-called 'Hidden Histories' will be a particular focus for the museum service over the coming years

Collections Management

Under the agreed legal framework for the service, ownership of the collections remains distinct between Colchester and Ipswich. This distinction is embedded in the formal accessioning and documentation process. This has a number of benefits but, in particular, it ensures that in the event of the joint museum service ever reverting back to two separate services then all items in either collection are clearly and unequivocally allocated. The Acquisition and Disposal Policy for Ipswich will have been reviewed by July, and any necessary changes made, in order to ensure that it meets the conditions required by Phase 3 Accreditation. Following this, later in 2008, there will be a far more fundamental review of the Ipswich policy which will also provide the opportunity to ensure that it dovetails with Colchester's existing policy (which may also need to be changed) in order to ensure clarity and avoidance of conflict over acquisition decisions. In producing this new policy a process of consultation with other museums will take place.

One of the issues that will need to be addressed when producing a new Acquisition and Disposal Policy for Ipswich is to ensure that there is agreement, with other museums in Suffolk, over collecting areas. In Essex good agreements exist, especially in relation to archaeological material, which clarifies arrangements over most of the county, including those districts that have no museum services. In Suffolk no such clear agreements seem to be in place, or at least are not so well developed, and this is something that needs to be addressed. Discussions over this have already started and will continue over the next few months. It will be very important in doing this that any such arrangements are not felt to have been imposed on the other smaller museums in Suffolk, but are rather the product of discussion and consensus.

An area that needs particular attention is Disaster Planning. A plan is currently being prepared in relation to Ipswich to be ready in time to be included as part of the Museum Accreditation submission to be made on behalf of the two Ipswich museums. Also, while a Disaster Plan exists for Colchester and though it was of a nature sufficient to meet Accreditation standards several years ago, it is recognised that it is far from ideal and is clearly in need of refreshment and improvement. The new Ipswich Plan should provide a good model to follow when revising the Colchester plan later in the year.

Documentation

The museum service conforms to the documentation standards laid down by the Museums Association in its 1994 *Code of Practice for Museum Governing Bodies*, to the SPECTRUM standards of the Museums Documentation Association and to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council criteria on access to collections. The museum collections, in both Colchester and Ipswich, are documented using the MODES for Windows documentation software. While there are some significant benefits of using and supporting the most widely used collections database in the UK there are, however, also some drawbacks. In particular in some aspects its functionality is poor and it is not particularly user friendly, especially in relation to web access. Consequently it is time to review the continuing use of MODES and decide whether the service wishes to find an alternative.

The effectiveness of past documentation has been very variable across the service. A few years ago, due to a large project grant from the Designation Challenge Fund, the documentation backlog at Colchester was to all intents and purposes eliminated. The situation is, however, very different at Ipswich where a significant backlog exists and where, in recent years, some basic documentation procedures seem to have slipped. There are clearly some serious issues to resolve here and this must be a major focus of attention for the service over the coming months and years. There may be opportunities through external funding to help with this, but initially this will need to be done with internal resources. A viable plan to deal with the documentation backlog will be an essential requirement for Phase 3 Accreditation for the two Ipswich museums.

An area in need of further attention will be the creation of more digital images of the collections. This is not only important for documentation, but also allows the opportunity to increase collections access by making digital images available on the museum service's website.

Conservation

At a time when some other museum services were choosing to outsource their conservation provision, as separate organisations prior to the merger, the decision was taken to retain conservation facilities at both Colchester and Ipswich and even to develop them further through investment. As a joint service, while it would be entirely feasible to obtain all necessary

conservation services externally, it is considered that there are real benefits in retaining in-house conservation provision. However, with two conservation laboratories it is now important to at least question the staffing and retention of both. Certainly, given that the conservation facilities in Colchester are significantly larger and better equipped than the laboratory in Ipswich, one possible option would be to focus conservation provision at Colchester. While such a course of action need not compromise collections care and could lead to significant cost benefits, before any decision is made a range of options and factors need to be investigated such as the idea of establishing additional income streams, including the development of specialist services, and the renting of bench space to freelance conservators. While it is most probable that both laboratories will be retained it will, however, be necessary to clearly set out and demonstrate the reasons and benefits of doing so.

Prior to the merger, both services had a history of taking conservation internships. Under the joint service this will be continued and, if possible, the number of opportunities will be increased. This has a range of benefits in that it not only supports the wider profession and the development of skills, but also provides some real benefits for the hosting organisation through the practical work undertaken, the management and supervisory experience that can be gained by a member of staff who normally has no line management duties and the new perspectives that a fresh pair of eyes can bring.

Storage

Storage is recognised as one of the critical issues facing the museum community in the UK. Combining the two services has allowed the beginning of integrated storage solutions leading to a more effective use of resources. In particular the new Heckworth Close bulk store, purchased by Colchester Borough Council, now provides a major resource for the organisation. During 2007, it has allowed the service to remove the stored museum collections from Holy Trinity Church, in Colchester, and Thorrington Barn, outside Ipswich, and release both to the respective local authorities so that they can realise other ambitions in relation to these buildings. It has also allowed some freeing up of space within the Museum Resource Centre, in Colchester, and so enabled a bigger reorganisation of space within the building.

The main focus of work is currently on clearing the High Street Exhibition Gallery, in Ipswich, in order to allow major roofing works to take place. Following the roofing work the intention is that this space will eventually form part of the permanent galleries, though in the interim it may need to be used as a work space to support other redevelopment work such as a new Egyptian Gallery. The implications of this, in both the short and long term, are that the collections material that was housed there must now be accommodated elsewhere. Consequently the other storage spaces within Ipswich Museum and the adjacent Annexe and ISH stores are all being reviewed in order to begin to reorganise them and maximise the available space. This will not only lead to improved conditions, but will also allow the beginning of the collection of location data which can be linked to the collections database.

Following this the next steps will be to review the overall situation in relation to storage. The first major issue that will need resolving is improved storage for the Ipswich art collection. While the material is not at risk, the conditions are far from ideal and, in particular, they make access to the collection difficult. The other major issue to resolve is that, if there is a desire for the museum service to vacate the Annexe and ISH stores, so that Ipswich Borough Council can realise a capital receipt, this will need to be balanced against the capital outlay and possible revenue implications of providing alternative spaces.

As well as the overall storage spaces attention is also needed in relation to how the collections are boxed and packaged. At Colchester, due to investment provided through the Designation

Challenge Fund, a major repacking and re-boxing exercise was undertaken, particularly in relation to the archaeology collections and to some of the social history material. There has also been significant ongoing investment in replacing old natural history storage cabinets. The biggest area that needs addressing at Colchester now relates to the costume collection and work will be progressing on this soon. At Ipswich, while some aspects of the collections are very well packed, the majority needs attention especially in relation to archaeology, social history and some aspects of natural history. Addressing these issues, at Ipswich, will need to be a major area of focus over the next few years.

Archaeological Archives

One of the most significant issues in regard to storage relates to the material generated by archaeological excavations. For instance, in relation to the Colchester collections they represent around 60% of the stored materials. In the East of England the situation is particularly acute given the many major regeneration projects taking place across the region, the government target figures for the construction of new housing and the major transport network improvements. All of which will generate a huge amount of archaeological material that ultimately will have to be stored by the region's museums. The status quo is not tenable and new thinking is required. Consequently, in order to attempt to address this problem, it is intended to conduct a pilot project, with appropriate partners, looking at the rationalisation of archaeological archives that will be of benefit not only to the service, but also act as a model more widely.

In relation to archaeological archives, a particular issue is the archaeological material currently held by various archaeological excavation units that should soon be deposited with the service. In relation to Essex this will involve receipt of the very large archive from Elms Farm, Heybridge. In Suffolk the key issue surrounds the large quantity of archaeological material from excavations in Ipswich, conducted over thirty years, currently held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Field Unit. A key action will be to take possession of this material and so bring about a number of benefits, including its proper curation and opening it up to public access (particularly for display purposes and specialist research). There are, however, some issues that still need to be resolved, especially around the major publication backlog of the SCC Archaeological Field Unit as this has the potential to significantly delay the handing over of some important site archives and so prevent them being properly curated and made more accessible to the public.

Rationalisation

Most museum services have to deal with a legacy of uncontrolled and, in some instances, completely inappropriate collecting. There is also the need to create space in order to take new material such as archaeological archives from recent excavations and objects representative of contemporary society. If this is not done there is a danger that collections will in effect fossilise and not grow and develop. Consequently all museums need to take a hard look at their existing collections and be prepared to positively consider disposal. Disposal can take a variety of forms, but the first option to consider is whether a particular individual item or group of items could be more appropriately housed and displayed elsewhere. One of the ways that the museum service will assess the Colchester and Ipswich collections is to consider adopting the use of the successful model used by Norfolk Museum & Archaeology Service (NMAS). This enables a process of continuous assessment that works alongside other activities, such as redisplay projects. It can then allow more informed disposal recommendations to be made and allow the gradual growth of an overall assessment. The Museum Association has also recently published a 'Disposal Toolkit' in order to help museums manage the process, when considering a disposal of any particular item, and this will be

particularly useful to the service over the next few years. In considering any disposal it is of course necessary to have a full understanding of the object involved and proper documentation is clearly an essential element here. It is also necessary to rigorously apply all the appropriate processes, which act as checks and safeguards, and to carry out any appropriate consultation.

An area that will be a particular focus will be paper archive material of which there is a significant amount at both Colchester and Ipswich. Some of this has been generated because of the role that each separate museum service played within their respective local authorities. For instance, in the late 19th century Colchester Castle became the repository of the town's historic charters (the earliest surviving example dating to 1189) and this has continued to this day. In some instances the archives held by the museum service represent a single coherent group of material, such as the Colchester Town charters, but in many other instances they just represent isolated items or parts of archives that are now split across several institutions. Overall there seems to be an ill thought out and random element to the nature of this archive material and it includes items that if offered today would not be considered for inclusion in the accessioned collections. It is clear that a complete review of the archive holdings in both towns is needed with a particular focus on split archives. In doing this the museum service has to be open to the idea that much of this material may be far better placed, both for its care and for the public's benefit, in other institutions particularly the county record offices of Suffolk and Essex. Any such decisions would, of course, only be made following discussion and agreement with the appropriate bodies.

Loans

The museum service regularly receives requests (locally, nationally and internationally) to loan items from the collections. As long as specific conditions are met, the service takes a very positive approach towards requests. Indeed this is very much expected of all Hub museums and of those holding Designated Collections. A loan to a national or foreign museum greatly adds to the prestige of the organisation and raises its profile. Involvement in an international loan, in particular, can also be a very positive experience both for the organisation and the individuals involved. Loans to other museums are also one of the ways the organisation can, and is expected to, support the wider museum community and it is also a way to make collections more accessible to a far wider audience.

In relation to loans something that will, however, need to be carefully considered is pressure on particular star objects. For instance, from the Colchester collections, the 16th-century saddle associated with Queen Elizabeth has been involved in several loans, in this country and America, which has meant that, for close on three years, it has not been displayed within Colchester. A similar situation is beginning to occur with the most important oil paintings by Constable and Gainsborough within the Ipswich collections. While it is important to make such material available for loan, it is appropriate that this is balanced with the need of local residents to see the items. Consequently, in relation to the items already mentioned a temporary bar may need to be placed on further loans.

In relation to incoming loans the museum service will, in particular, look to develop sustained active partnerships with, and encourage loans from, one or more national museums.

6. Interpretation

Interpretation

The museum service has stunning buildings and collections and there is a duty to make these accessible, both physically and intellectually, to as wide an audience as possible. There is also a need to cater to changing customer expectations and it is important to recognise that the service operates within an increasingly competitive leisure market. Consequently it is important to have a constant process of refreshment and renewal, leading to a sense of continuing change and improvement.

Interpretation must work for a wide range of audiences. Displays need to be inspirational and informative but at the same time there is no reason why they cannot seek to be entertaining. They need to be family friendly, but also fulfil the National Curriculum needs of schools. While some would argue that museums need to be places of quiet contemplation, there are clear economic and social imperatives that require them to be welcoming and accessible spaces that have a resonance for the wider community and not just a narrow segment. There is, however, clearly a balance that can be struck that gives room for a range of approaches.

Over the coming years, though each museum will retain distinctiveness, they will be united under an umbrella of common standards of excellence in interpretation. A wide range of interpretation methods capable of stimulating all the senses will be used. Hands-on and multimedia interactives, drama and other events can all play a part in interpreting the natural and human heritage of Ipswich, Colchester and the surrounding areas.

The service currently has a significant provision in terms of temporary exhibition space mainly though Colchester Castle and Gallery 3 at Ipswich Town Hall and these will continue to be the main focal points for such activity over the next few years. These are supplemented by smaller scale provision at most of the other buildings. Over the recent past there seems to have been a great emphasis on temporary exhibitions at Ipswich Museum. This seems, however, to have been at the expense of investing in the more permanent galleries. Consequently, there will now be a very deliberate move away from this, though the building will always still retain some small provision for temporary displays especially related to new acquisitions.

In relation to permanent galleries there is often a temptation to tell too many stories in one venue. One of the opportunities provided by the combined museum service is that it is possible to tell the relevant stories over the full range of venues and not try to tell all in a single building. Telling different stories in different places and also telling broader stories in more than one location opens up significant potential in terms of cross-marketing and encouraging visitors to visit more of the museums. Consequently each building will focus on a narrower range of themes than they have in the past. So, for instance, the emphasis on the Late Iron Age and Roman stories will clearly be in Colchester while the major emphasis on the Saxons will be in Ipswich. This does not mean exclusivity and there will be a continuing need for connecting threads such as, for instance, the local Roman story of Ipswich still having a presence in Ipswich Museum and the Colchester Saxon story still told at Colchester Castle, but clearly the emphasis needs to be on the major themes (N.B. specific themes are discussed under the individual buildings below).

Throughout the buildings there will also be an emphasis on the stories of individuals who have played prominent roles in the history of the museums and their collections. Some of the people to be featured will be: Basil Brown; Rex Hull; Reid Moir; Mortimer Wheeler; John Wymer;

Christopher Hawkes; John Henslow; William Wire; William Kirby; Harold Poulter; Fergus Ogilvie and others.

A particular area of focus for the service will be to provide interpretation outside the museum buildings. In some instances this will involve taking collections out through such things as the 'Museum to Go' project or providing interpretation in other venues, for instance the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester. There also needs to be a growing emphasis on inviting community groups to interpret the collections in their own ways and apply their own meanings. Community engagement of this kind can generate important new insights and new understandings of the collections and can often result in new material being added to the collections.

The museum service's website also provides exciting opportunities for interpretation. At the simplest level it could provide an archive for activity that can be fleeting and can give it a wider audience such as films and drama events. This is an area that is likely to see major developments.

Over the next few years the museum service will be delivering and developing many interpretation and redisplay projects including some that are very large, complex and ambitious. This will necessitate very careful planning in order not to overstretch or divert resources. Consequently it will be critical to develop and maintain a robust and flexible planning framework covering the whole service.

Colchester Castle

Colchester Castle is an exceptional building of national importance. It underwent a rolling programme of redevelopment during the 1990s and, though further gallery development has taken place, it is now in need of a further major redevelopment programme. This is a real opportunity to turn an excellent museum into an outstanding one that is truly fit for the 21st century.

Consequently a major HLF bid, at around £3 million, is currently in the process of preparation. The focus of the redevelopment will be on the displays, though some important visitor facilities and infrastructure will be included. In the new displays, as in all the other museums, the number of themes covered will be reduced and will concentrate on the following three areas: the exceptional late Iron Age and Roman story (not just of the town, but also as part of a sub-regional perspective), the later history of Colchester up to 1700 and the story of the Castle itself.

Natural History Museum

In 1954 the disused church of All Saints, in Colchester, was acquired by Colchester Borough Council and was opened as a natural history museum in 1958. A number of significant improvements have been made over the last few years and currently a major redisplay of the eastern end of the church, with grant aid from the Wolfson Fund, is underway. In the past, however, development has progressed as and when resources and opportunities have allowed rather than according to a clear plan and timetable. This phased approach has, however, delivered benefits as it has given a clear sense of change and improvement over time. Consequently it is still intended to continue with a phased approach, but now to do this against a clearer overall plan and timescale.

The developing focus of the museum already is bio-diversity and modern wildlife habitats, and this will continue though some specific other themes will also feature such as the Colchester

earthquake of 1884. Another area of focus will be environmental issues such as climate change and the museum has the clear potential to be a venue where such issues can be presented and debated.

Hollytrees

Hollytrees is a Georgian town house that was opened as a museum in 1929. It underwent a major redevelopment in 2001 and now tells the story of domestic life and childhood in Colchester over the past 300 years and this will continue to be its focus. There are no plans for further major refurbishment at present, but ongoing investment will be needed in order to continually refresh the galleries. One area that is currently receiving attention is the conversion of the first floor space, previously referred to as the Period Room, into a more flexible temporary exhibition area.

Tymperleys

Tymperleys is part of a bigger 15th-century timber-framed house and was opened as a museum in 1987, principally to display the Bernard Mason Collection of Colchester Clocks. There are a number of issues surrounding this building that have limited further investment and development. Currently the museum only occupies the ground floor of the building, with the upper two floors used by Colchester Borough Council as a meeting area and a venue for hire. This split use, however, is not satisfactory as the very restricted ground floor space limits the opportunities for further development as a museum and the use of the upper floors has largely ceased due to access issues and similar space limitations. It is clear that it would be far better for the building to have a single use. If the single use was to be a museum then it may be possible to find a solution that allows a lift to be installed and so open up the upper floors. Conversely if the whole building was turned over as a meeting and hiring venue, with the ground floor and garden, it would become a far more attractive and viable venue.

Consequently museum staff will work, with other colleagues within Colchester Borough Council, to look at the different options for future use. If the decision was to focus the use of the building towards a meetings and hiring venue then it is important to stress that this would only be done in the context of another museum venue having been established that would cover both the clock collection and the wider working life of the town. If, however, the decision is that the building be devoted to museum use, then the opportunity would be taken to cover other aspects of working life in Colchester over the last three hundred years including the town's important industrial heritage, particularly with engineering firms such as Paxmans, and the military garrison as well as continuing with a major focus on the clock collection and increased interpretation of the house itself. There are already some ideas forming of how the building could be significantly developed as a museum. This could include creating a glass covered link between the main building and the clock turret building, opening the small modern building on the west side for public use and making far more use of the garden. A revamped museum would also need to resolve access issues, but it is considered feasible that a lift, to allow access to at least the first floor, would be possible.

If the building is to be significantly developed as a museum, then the idea of increasing the opening times, either for a more extended season or for a full seven days a week all year round in line with most of the other museums, should be considered. The benefits of doing this would, however, have to be carefully weighed against the added staffing costs that would be involved.

Ipswich Museum

Ipswich Museum, situated in the High Street in Ipswich is a purpose built, late Victorian museum. In recent years investment in the permanent galleries has been limited with far more of an emphasis placed on temporary exhibitions. The museum is now, however, in need of major redevelopment. During the first year of the joint museum service two of the things that have become apparent are: firstly, the strong public appeal, especially to families, that Ipswich Museum has, once people are attracted inside and secondly, the really exciting potential for large scale and dramatic redevelopment. There are clear possibilities of a major extension to the building, particularly through infilling one or both of the courtyard areas on either side of the building with a modern glass and steel structure. This would allow the creation of a brand new, and far more welcoming, entrance area. The advantage of doing this, between the High Street Exhibition Gallery and the main museum, is that it would more firmly link the space to the other galleries. Such a structure, or structures, would need to be of the highest architectural merit and have the potential to transform the museum into a landmark building of regional significance. The scheme would, however, need to involve a major capital investment of perhaps £6 million. While there will obviously be challenges in doing this it is certainly achievable and it is clear that there is already significant support for such a proposal. What we have is a real opportunity to create a remarkable museum that is truly world class.

In redisplaying Ipswich Museum there are clear front runners in terms of themes that could be covered, reflecting the strengths of the collection, the traditional role of the museum and customer feedback. These include:

- The geology and the evolution of the landscape, and prehistory, particularly reflecting the important role played in the development of prehistoric studies in this country by people associated with the museum.
- The Victorian Natural History Gallery, which will be extended by reinstating the front part of the gallery.
- The Ogilvie Bird collection, but with new ways of interpretation.
- World Cultures, including an Egyptian Gallery.
- Saxon Ipswich, reflecting the importance of Ipswich during the foundation of England and the wealth of material that has come from excavations in the town and surrounding areas.

There is also a longer term ambition to convert the current office spaces into a 20th-century art gallery as this area previously formed part of the Ipswich Art School. This will, however, be dependent on developments elsewhere, particularly at Christchurch Mansion.

The High Street Exhibition Gallery has for some time been largely unusable due to major structural problems. These are now being resolved and the opportunity exists to return it to a public exhibition space. While this might have to wait to be part of the far larger redevelopment of the whole museum, in the interim it will prove invaluable as a flexible space to be used for a variety of purposes. For instance, during the work to create a new Egyptian gallery that it is hoped will begin to progress over the coming year, it can provide a much needed temporary work space to lay out collections and act as a display workshop.

Currently Ipswich Museum is only open five days a week (from Monday to Saturday) and clearly in the light of any major redevelopment the means to allow a seven-day opening would need to be found. In the interim, however, there may be significant value in trying to extend opening hours, perhaps through a phased approach, though the cost implications would need to be carefully considered.

Christchurch Mansion

This magnificent Tudor mansion is currently used as a museum to display fine and decorative art coupled with a range of room settings that, in particular, allow parts of the furniture and costume collections to be displayed. Overall, however, the displays are somewhat confused and there are no clear storylines or themes uniting the whole building. Thought still needs to be given to the major themes to be covered, but clearly this will include the history of the house and continuing to act as a showcase for pre-20th century fine and applied art. There is also a real opportunity to establish Christchurch Mansion as a centre for understanding the life and work of John Constable, particularly by adding to the display relevant material currently held in the reserve collections at Colchester. One historical story to be told in the building will be that of Margaret Catchpole, a famous, or infamous, local character of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Over the next few years some major investment and structural alterations will occur in the building, including a lift scheme and ongoing roofing works. In the longer term, as part of an overall development plan, there are some clear possibilities of expansion and improvement. Two areas that in particular need exploring are a major expansion of the café area, with an infill glass and steel structure, and the conversion of the third floor attic rooms into a suite of offices. While there will undeniably be a range of challenges and obstacles to overcome these ideas offer real benefits and so every effort should be made in order to find solutions.

In relation to Christchurch Mansion a clear opportunity also now exists to work in partnership with staff operating in the Reg Driver Centre which has newly opened adjacent to the mansion. It is unclear what this might involve at present, but it could include collaborative working in relation to school groups.

Ipswich Town Hall

Ipswich Town Hall is a splendid example of late Victorian and Edwardian civic pride. It is no longer used for its original purpose and now needs a new life. Currently it has four different uses and, though there is some compatibility in these, they can lead to confusion and conflicts of interest. It is clear that there is now a need to establish a more integrated long term plan for the building, particularly as the intention is to open up even more of the building to public access including the Council Chamber. Though no clear decisions have been taken over the themes that any museum use will take, it is likely to cover the later history of Ipswich and continue to provide a major venue for temporary exhibitions. It would also seem to be a good venue to establish a permanent display related to the cartoonist Carl Giles given that the Town Hall is so closely located to where he worked in Ipswich and because of the clear popular support for such an idea.

External Interpretation

The service is also involved in the wider heritage interpretation within Colchester. The major area of focus is the development of an interpretation scheme, which will be the subject of an £1 million HLF bid. Museum staff are also, currently, playing a role in helping to provide further interpretation within Colchester Castle Park.

There are also opportunities, within both towns to link in with other projects. So for instance, with the aid of a £50,000 grant from the HLF, the Berryfield Roman Mosaic, currently displayed in the entrance area of Colchester Castle, is to be moved to the new contemporary arts centre, Firstsite, so that it can be displayed close to where it was originally found. In Ipswich an

agreement has been reached with the Ipswich Historic Churches Trust over the loan of several medieval objects, including a fragment of a black marble font from Tower Ramparts in Ipswich. The objects will go on display in the refurbished St Peter's Church which is due to open during 2008. This not only supports this community project, but also makes more publicly accessible museum material that would otherwise be kept in store. Another interesting, developing opportunity may be provided by working with the Ipswich Maritime Trust which may allow similar displays to be incorporated into a number of venues. There are clearly going to be similar opportunities like this in the future both in Ipswich and Colchester.

Interpretation through Research and Publications

Research and publication provide another important means of unlocking stories. Though the ability of the service to contribute to research projects, because of pressure on resources, is inevitably limited it can make significant contributions both directly through the work of staff, and indirectly by supporting others. One subject that will be a particular area of focus will be producing a major monograph on Colchester Castle. Within the lifetime of this plan it is expected to have a draft text ready for publication.

Over the next few years there will also be a need to produce some popular guidebooks to some of the museums. Such guidebooks not only act as an important souvenir of a visit, but also provide a significant income stream.

7. Engaging Young Minds

Every Child Matters

Participating in cultural activity can have a significant impact on young people's development including: positively impacting on their learning, inspiring them, and helping them develop and realise talent and creativity. It can foster feelings of self worth, pride and belonging. This has been particularly identified in the government report 'Every Child Matters' which has resulted in the release of £25 million under the banner 'Unlocking Talent'. The stated ambition of this scheme is to give every child five hours of quality arts and culture every week. The funding will allow ten pilot projects to develop over a three-year period. It is unclear whether the joint museum service will be involved in one of these pilots, but this is clearly a strong possibility and it will be necessary to respond positively and quickly to any proposals.

School Visits

School visits are one of the main, and easiest, ways for a museum to positively engage with young people and they are one of the main measures of relative performance of a service. In 2006/2007, more than 30,000 school children made a visit to the museums in Colchester and Ipswich. This is, in large part, because of the nature of the education products on offer which are designed to be directly relevant to a pupil's learning in the classroom. Another factor is the high quality of the whole experience from the initial booking, to the visit itself through to the support and evaluation systems.

Prior to the creation of the joint museum service the school numbers at Ipswich had seen at least a 5-year downward trend reaching the relatively low number of 5,262 in 2005/2006. Consequently a main focus for the joint service, in the first year, has been to halt this downward trend and begin to realise the great potential for growth that there undoubtedly is at Ipswich. As a consequence, though no dramatic uplift has yet occurred, a modest increase

has been achieved and it is clear that the well established reputation in relation to the Colchester education programme is now beginning to extend to Ipswich.

The current strength of the schools programme in Colchester lies in the subjects of the Romans, Normans, toys and domestic life in Victorian times. This sits very well with Ipswich's strongest educational potential which is in the areas of the Egyptians, Tudors, natural history, world cultures and art. At Ipswich the Anglo-Saxons is another clear possibility though careful thought needs to be given as to whether this is a realistic option in light of the existing schools programmes at West Stow and Sutton Hoo. It is very important when developing any new education offers that they are designed to complement the provision provided by others and not to compete with them.

In order to develop the schools market ongoing investment in the education resources and programmes will be needed. Particularly at Ipswich, however, increased numbers will be, in large part, dependent on gallery development. Consequently the first stage in redeveloping Ipswich Museum will involve the creation of a new Egyptian gallery which, at its core, will incorporate the needs of the schools audience.

Some areas of specific activity will include: creating a sustainable Extended Schools programme initially through a pilot, building on existing early years programming by rolling this out across more museum sites, creating a sustainable and relevant learning programme for schools in Ipswich and developing an INSET support for teachers of ITT students as part of the Real Teaching Programme.

In developing and expanding education provision it is, of course, very important that this is done in a sustainable way, particularly in relation to staff capacity. With this in mind, during the first year of the new museum service, it was considered essential to add a new full-time education post at Ipswich, in addition to the existing part-time post, and thus more than double the staffing resource.

Events

An events programme is one of the ways a museum service can attract new audiences and repeat visitors. It is also a way to create a sense of change and vibrancy, and it is within an events programme that most often a sense of fun can be generated. It is also a vital tool in engaging with the wider community, particularly away from the museum buildings. Events are, in particular, one of the ways that the service can engage constructively with young people either individually or as part of family groups.

Information Technology

Young people, especially, are accessing cultural information in many new ways using rapidly developing technology. This is an area that cultural organisations cannot ignore, though the rapid developments can make it hard to keep up. Costs are, however, reducing and in some areas the need for major capital investment in equipment is lessening as it is becoming increasingly possible to piggy-back on the visitors' own mobile technology. Currently the museum service has no clear strategy in this area, but it something that will need to be addressed.

Young People on the Edge

For a variety of reasons and circumstances some young people find themselves marginalised and feel excluded from society. There can be barriers, physical, perceptual and economic, that

prevent some from realising their potential. At one extreme some will enter the offending system; in this area culture can play a beneficial part and over the last few years the museum service has been involved in a number of projects in this area. Working with outreach workers from the Essex Fostering Team has been particularly rewarding and has resulted in two outstanding projects, FAT Heritage and 100 United, and this partnership will be built on in the future. Similarly work with the Behavioural Support Unit in Southend has proved to be very beneficial for the young people involved and work in this area will continue.

8. Audience Development & Community Engagement

Community Engagement

In order to bring about increased access it is necessary to engage in a dialogue with the community, particularly with those who do not traditionally see museums as relevant to their lives. Currently, most museums have audiences that reflect only a relatively narrow band of society and though they are collectively making major advances there is still some way to go to establish more inclusive environments and services.

It is, however, vital for a museum to establish its relevance to the wider community, both in terms of volume and diversity. This is particularly important in order to retain the confidence and support of its funding bodies. All local authorities have to make tough decisions over budgets and priorities and it is understandable, and to be expected, that a museum service that fails to show its relevance, has declining public use and little evidence of being valued by the wider community will be subject to budgetary cuts.

There are many methods to engage with the wider community, but one of the most effective ways is through outreach work. It is especially important when trying to engage with communities who do not traditionally use museums or who do not see them as having any relevance in their lives. Consequently outreach will be a major area of focus for the service. It is also through outreach work that the service demonstrates a commitment to building relationships with new audiences that are lasting and strengthened over time. Planned programmes of outreach work with a range of different partners will provide ways of encouraging people 'over the threshold'. Having once engaged with a community group, it is important to ensure that involvement and enthusiasm are maintained. This need not involve continuing direct action, but rather a shift to support and encouragement as confidence is built up within the community. It is also important to maintain contact with and sustain the interest of older and/or longer established audiences who may experience access difficulties. This can embrace a variety of pro-active work around, for example, reminiscence, in which museum resources are used to take elements of the collections to these groups.

As part of the process of attracting new audiences it is necessary to have more inclusive and accessible services, and ones that reflect the diverse histories and stories of the whole community. A way to produce more inclusive services is to directly involve the community in helping to develop and deliver a particular project or service, display or exhibition. This helps bring about a feeling of ownership, break down initial perceptual barriers as well as creating a better end result. Empowering the community to play a part, to continue to be involved and to have an influence on service development can only be of benefit to a publicly funded organisation.

Over the next two years a particular area of attention will be to develop some projects that engage with and explore the lives and experiences of homeless people in the area. Currently this exists as a kind of 'hidden history' and it is part of the museum service's role to try and

record such parts of society. There is also a real opportunity, by working in partnership with experienced organisations already operating in this field, to help bring about some positive outcomes for some of the people involved.

Disability Access

Colchester & Ipswich Museum Service has an established and growing reputation as a leader in the field of certain aspects of disability access within the museum sector and more widely. An approach to disability access has become firmly incorporated into the way of working at Colchester, particularly through the disability access advisory group known as PORTAL. It is clear that directly involving disabled people in the discussion and decision making process not only helps provide far more inclusive museum provision, but is also a life changing experience for all involved. In relation to Ipswich, however, this is a new way of working and efforts are currently underway to fully embed this approach in relation to disability consultation and access there as well. With the influx of new staff it is, however, also necessary to refresh the principle at Colchester.

As well as the general approach towards disability there have been a number of significant achievements in this area during 2007/2008. Particularly notable has been the 'Rethinking Disability History Project' which has looked at the history and contemporary experiences of disabled people, their families and people who work for them in Colchester. This has then been displayed through a range of interpretation methods, including photography and oral history in an exhibition called 'Life Beyond the Label'. It has formed part of a far larger national project being co-ordinated by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at Leicester University.

Prior to merger, Colchester Museums had been mounting a series of national conferences, under the banner 'Dis:cover', discussing issues around disability and showcasing best practice in museums and related sectors. Under the remit of the joint museum service, the fourth of these conferences was held in June 2007. It focussed on the representation of people with disabilities and was opened by Anne McGuire MP, Minister for the Disabled. These conferences will continue to be a major focus for the museum service. The decision has been taken to run these conferences every two years with the next one occurring in 2009 and then subsequently in 2011. On alternate years the museum service will deliver an innovative access related event.

Another significant project that is in the development stage is one that focuses on Asperger's syndrome. This project is designed to support families and children living with Asperger's and to raise awareness and understanding of the syndrome and how people living with Asperger's see and interpret the world around them. The project will result in an animated film and exhibition that will tour venues in the region.

In terms of more general activity the service will continue to improve and increase provision for people who are deaf or hearing impaired and who have sight impairments. This will include: BSL interpreters at a number of events as part of the general events programming, BSL tours at both Colchester and Ipswich museums, dedicated front of house Access Assistants, themed object handling events, guided touch tours and self-led audio guides. A developing focus for the service will also be around mental health. Work in this area is still in its early stages, but will develop over the next few years.

The service also now needs to revisit the Disability History Subject Specialist Network for which it has in the past received an exploratory grant from MLA. The way forward is likely to be by

providing and managing a web-based information and discussion forum, either hosted by MLA or through the service's own website.

Another activity will be to develop a project that will look at the history and development of the Paralympics. This will form one of the main areas of activity for the service related to the 2012 Olympic Games.

Customer Excellence

Delivering excellent customer service has to be a central tenet for any public service organisation. Customer care must never be seen as a 'box ticking' exercise, but as a process that requires continual evaluation, improvement and refreshment. Every person in the organisation needs to understand and accept responsibility for delivering the very best in terms of customer care. In order to achieve this, a 'Customer Excellence' training programme, along the lines of the current Colchester Borough Council scheme, will be rolled out across the organisation. Other training, both formal and informal, will also be conducted to raise awareness of customer care issues. Each member of staff will have a 'Customer Excellence' objective as part of their annual SMART objectives work plan.

The museum service will also continue to actively support and participate in the larger Institute of Customer Services (ICS) awards programme being run by Colchester Borough Council. Three members of museum staff are currently undertaking the awards process while another is acting as a coach to two other members of Colchester Borough Council staff also undertaking the awards.

The Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme, described in the next section, is of special value in helping to maintain customer care standards.

Marketing

Effective and relevant marketing plays a key role in developing, building and sustaining new and existing audiences. The range and breadth of collections, buildings and activities that the service provides has an enormous marketing potential in terms of attracting and developing audiences. In particular the museum service provides a major offer in terms of regional tourism. This gives a strong platform on which to launch an exciting destination marketing campaign that has the potential to attract more visitors from across the tourism spectrum.

There is need to create a strong and identifiable brand and style that reflects and represents the strengths and aspirations of the service and provides a clear focus for marketing campaigns. It is also necessary now to proceed to the production of a joint website that can not only help in creating a strong identity, but can also help deliver on a range of fronts.

In order to enable effective marketing a particular issue will be to more closely understand the current audience profiles. A significant amount of data already exists concerning visitors to some of the museums in Colchester, especially Colchester Castle, though there are certainly gaps and only limited analysis of the data has taken place. In Ipswich very little information currently exists and a clear priority must be to redress this in the coming year. Once appropriate amounts of data are collected it will then be important to analyse it in order to allow it to inform future marketing activity.

Consultation

In order to ensure the continuing relevance and effectiveness of current services, and to help identify the need for further development it is necessary to conduct a range of consultation and evaluation processes. There is a particular need to conduct more in depth consultation exercises in relation to Ipswich and also in respect of the major redevelopment projects the service is planning.

In 2006 the museum service commissioned the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at Leicester University to conduct research into attitudes of disabled people to museums and heritage. This has not only provided valuable insights, but has also helped influence further service development. By the end of the life of this development plan it will be valuable to commission a repeat of this work in order to attempt to measure and evaluate the impact of the work of the service in relation to disability.

9. Organisational Effectiveness

Business Management

The strategic development, overall priorities, targets and policies of the merged service are set and agreed through the joint museum committee. However, in relation to the day-to-day delivery of the service, including employment and financial management, Colchester Borough Council acts as the lead body. Consequently, the headquarters building of the service is in Colchester at the Museum Resource Centre, which houses the main administrative office, as well as other staff accommodation, a series of laboratories and the most important Colchester reserve collections.

On 1st April 2007 a number of variations in the administrative procedures at Colchester and Ipswich were inherited. As a single organisation it is, of course, necessary to establish more integrated and efficient systems that are common to both Colchester and Ipswich. There is, however, still some way to go in this area. Progress has not been as fast as would have been liked and some duplication and inefficiencies still exist. In the next year it will be a priority to resolve this and consequently a complete review of the Business Support Team and all Business Support Systems needs to be undertaken in 2008/2009.

As the employing body and the budget holder Colchester Borough Council provides certain key support services for the new joint organisation. All other support costs and internal recharges for the museum service in Ipswich remain the responsibility of Ipswich Borough Council. During the first year the IT support budgets relating to Ipswich also stayed with Ipswich Borough Council. Progress in taking over these budgets and creating an integrated IT system has again not proceeded as fast as would have been desired, but this will be a major area of focus over the next few months.

Information Technology

Information Technology is referred to in a number of sections of this plan and one of the issues for the service is to bring this all together into an overarching IT strategy. In particular, however, significant investment is needed in basic IT infrastructure especially in relation to the means of linking, and properly integrating, the museum premises into the wider IT system of Colchester Borough Council. At the end of the first year of the new museum service it was hoped to have this issue largely resolved, but in the event this was not possible. Consequently

it must now become a high priority for the service to make significant progress in establishing a fully integrated IT system across the whole organisation.

Buildings Management

In terms of building management a two strand approach operates. The joint museum service directly controls the budgets in relation to the museum buildings in Colchester while in Ipswich it is Ipswich Borough Council which retains control. The building budgets remaining at Ipswich include repairs, gas, electricity, water, rates and buildings insurance. In order to ensure the smooth operation of this arrangement, quarterly buildings liaison meetings are held between key museum staff and the appropriate officers in Ipswich Borough Council. Museum staff also form part of all buildings project meetings.

Similarly most of the Ipswich maintenance contracts have continued to be managed directly by Ipswich Borough Council. As time progresses it will, however, be worth investigating merging some maintenance agreements particularly through a comparison of prices under the respective Council arrangements. This has already proved possible in relation to the annual servicing of the X-ray machine at Ipswich.

Some major building works, relating to public and staff access, are in the planning stages at Christchurch Mansion. A scheme to build a lift has been under development for some time. There is also the issue of needing to establish access and use of the third floor in order to more fully realise the potential of this important building. These projects will be progressed under the lead of Ipswich Borough Council working with museum staff.

At both Colchester and Ipswich a review of office space is being undertaken, particularly related to the need to: accommodate additional staff, improve the working environment and facilitate more effective team working. In the Museum Resource Centre it has already proved possible to go a long way in implementing a number of significant improvements. Some re-organisation is already beginning to take place at Ipswich, but a major review is still to be undertaken. The focus needs to be initially at Ipswich Museum, but improvements at Christchurch are also needed.

Health and Safety

During the first year of the new service some progress has been made in creating an integrated Health and Safety framework. The initial focus at the Ipswich end has been to try and bring all relevant information together in order to allow a better assessment of the overall situation. Major work is, however, still needed in this area and this will be a priority in the second year of the organisation. It has proved possible to conduct some assessments of specific spaces, both at Ipswich and Colchester, including the two conservation laboratories. This has helped identify some action that needs to be taken over time as well as some that has required immediate action. Some specific areas that will need attention are improved organisation within all of the laboratories, but particularly at Ipswich, and improvements to chemical labelling and storage. There is also a need to conduct a review of all chemicals at Ipswich in order to identify ones that are no longer needed and then to organise an appropriate disposal process.

Sustainability/Green Agenda

Global warming, and in particular the need to reduce CO₂ emissions, is clearly a critical issue for the planet and is very much at the forefront of Local Authority agendas. It is important that the museum sector fully engages with this. Sustainability and energy reduction must be built into all future development projects. In fact evidence for this will also be an increasing factor in

the successful submission of funding bids to grant giving bodies. While there is a particular issue when dealing with historic buildings it is clear that more sustainable solutions are possible, even quite radical ones, and it is necessary to be imaginative and open to ideas. For instance, it is hoped that through the redevelopment of Colchester Castle it will be possible to include some elements, such as under-floor heating, which may make it a model for others in relation to finding more sustainable approaches in historic buildings. When developing the major redevelopment proposals for Ipswich Museum this will also need to be a core consideration.

On a very practical and immediate level the museum service will fully commit to Colchester Borough Council's 'Turn Off' campaign and other energy reducing initiatives and, in order to facilitate this, will identify a member of staff as a 'Green Champion'. Similarly the museum service will contribute to initiatives being run through Ipswich Borough Council. The museum service can play its part to help both councils to achieve their specific targets, such as reduced CO₂ emissions. One of the targets that the service will set is a 5% reduction in its carbon footprint during the lifetime of this plan. A first step in doing this, however, is a need to assess the current carbon footprint. A key focus here will be direct energy usage, but other issues will also be taken into account such as materials used and items sold in the various retail outlets. Plastic bags have already been eliminated from all of the museum service's retail outlets and a commitment has been made to introduce more ethically sourced and manufactured merchandise.

There is not only an opportunity for the museum service to tackle this issue through its own direct action, but it can also become a focal point for public engagement over the issue and provide a vehicle to showcase the efforts and achievements of both councils in this area.

It is also important to have a sustainable and ethical approach in both procurement and commercial activities, such as retail and catering.

Performance Measures and Industry Standards

Accurate and consistent measurement and comparison of performance are vital tools in gauging the health of any organisation. At a national level, the Audit Commission has measured local authority museum services under a number of performance indicators including: the number of usages of museums services per 1000 of the population in the district, the number of those usages that were visits in person per 1000 of the population and the number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups. This system is currently being changed; however, there will still be significant benefits for the service in continuing to collect this data and compare performance on a year on year basis. Using these and a range of other measures, there are also systems in place for comparing performance at both county and regional level. While the organisations collecting this comparative data are not always able to consistently sustain the process it is important that the service continues to support these systems because of benefits they provide to the wider museum community.

Museum Accreditation is the main form of measuring standards within the museum sector in England and is important for a number of reasons. In particular it: demonstrates a governing body's commitment to achieve and maintain national standards, provides a valuable framework when creating policies and undertaking planning, gives an ethical basis (especially in relation to acquisition and disposal) and is used as a key criterion by grant-giving bodies in establishing eligibility for funding. Phase III of the scheme is currently being rolled out across England. Colchester Borough Council has already received Phase III Accreditation for all four of its museum venues. Applications in relation to the two Ipswich museums have been invited with a

submission deadline of November 2008. There is some significant work needed in order to produce a successful submission, but no insurmountable problems are currently envisaged.

Another very important, government-backed, national scheme is Designation. Under this scheme, collections held by museums, libraries and archives are recognised as being pre-eminent of their type, of outstanding quality and as being of great importance in the context of the nation's shared heritage. Colchester secured Designated status for its archaeology collections in June 1998 which has resulted in a number of benefits including just over £450,000 of investment from the Designation Challenge Fund. In 1998 an unsuccessful application for Designated status was made in relation to Ipswich. This does not, however, preclude a fresh application being made with respect to one or more parts of the Ipswich collections. The Designation Scheme is, however, currently being reviewed and there is uncertainty over the future of the Designation Challenge Fund. Consequently the urgency of making an application in respect of the Ipswich collection has diminished. The situation will, however, be carefully monitored and, assuming the scheme continues, it is still intended to make an application in relation to the Ipswich art collection, and possibly a later one in relation to the natural history collections.

The Visitor Attraction Quality Assured Scheme (VAQAS) is a comprehensive, national assessment programme designed specifically for visitor attractions. The scheme is operated, through a subscription process, by the English Tourism Council and administered by the regional tourist boards. An independent, qualified assessor carries out each assessment. Each assessment is made on merit, using objective quality benchmarks provided by the tourism industry, and results in a face-to-face debrief and written report as well as the overall rating. All four museums in Colchester have successfully attained status as 'Quality Assured Visitor Attractions' over the last six years. For the first time in 2007 the two Ipswich museums were also included in the scheme and, following an assessment in the early summer, both successfully gained status as 'Quality Assured Visitor Attractions'. This has provided an added benefit in that it simplifies the Accreditation applications for the two Ipswich museums, as this status fully satisfies the requirements of the customer services section and negates the need to provide additional information.

10. Commercial Development

Commercial Activity

While retaining the primacy of core principles such as inclusion and fair access, it is important for a museum to maximise appropriate commercial opportunities so as to allow both increased investment and keep the net cost of the service down. The service earns income from a number of sources including; admissions to Colchester Castle, retail, schools service, guided tours, events, catering, vending, photographs, hiring, conservation, specialist surveys, talks and more. In particular, the smaller income streams allow the development of a more diverse commercial base and so reduces the reliance on the larger income sources and particularly helps mitigate any temporary downturn, for whatever reason, in these areas. A strategy of continuing to develop and diversify the income base through the growth of smaller areas will continue.

Colchester Castle Admissions

The largest single source of commercial income for the joint service is from admission charges to Colchester Castle and this income will continue to be critical in supporting the joint service. In recent years, however, there has been some difficulty meeting this income target due to a

range of largely external factors, though it also highlights the importance and need for constant renewal and investment. There is also an issue that, while many regional museums charge for admission, it is increasingly at variance with national strategy of free admission. While the funding to enable this has only been provided to the national museums there are some public expectations that it should have wider application. While, currently, there is no realistic possibility of discontinuing the entry charge to Colchester Castle, opportunities can be provided that allow access for those who are economically disadvantaged. At present this principally relates to two, or sometimes three, major events when entry to the Colchester Castle is free, but there are a number of other options that will be explored and pursued. It is worth stressing that there is no intention to introduce admission charges at any of the other museums run by the service.

Retail

The museum service runs several retail outlets with the largest and most successful being in Colchester Castle. At all of them, however, there is significant potential for further growth. This combined growth will be of major importance in allowing the new service to develop and importantly meet its financial targets. Though some advances have been made in the first year this is not as far as had originally been hoped and it is clear that there are still some significant challenges in this area. One thing is certain, however, if the retail operation is to continue to have the current level of staff resources devoted to it then a significant advance has to be made in 2008/2009. If this does not occur then the delivery of the retail operation will need to be thoroughly reviewed.

Investment is currently being planned for several of the retail spaces. At Ipswich this is being done in two phases, with initial investment already being made at the High Street Museum with development at Christchurch Mansion hopefully following early in 2008/2009. At Colchester a redesigned and enlarged retail space will be built into the plans for the redevelopment of the Castle Museum and the other retail spaces will be further developed as and when opportunities arise.

In relation to retail operations regard will be taken to obtaining goods from sustainable and fair trade sources.

Catering and Vending

There is significant value in having catering or vending provision as it not only gives a potential source of income, but also provides an added benefit and incentive for visitors which encourages them to stay longer. It can also be very beneficial in attracting and developing the group market, especially organised coach groups. However, in operating catering or vending provision it has been the experience of a number of museums that it can be difficult to run these at a profit and incidences of loss making museum operations are not uncommon. This has, in fact, been the case at Christchurch Mansion, the only proper catering facility run by the museum service. Consequently, following the formation of the joint service in April 2007 a very close eye has been kept on income and expenditure. In the early winter of 2007 it became apparent that the volume of business had reduced to such an extent that it was now operating at a loss. This situation was exacerbated by the major renovation work being undertaken at the time in Christchurch Park. A review of performance over the last few years has also revealed a pattern of the café operating at a loss from October through to March. This has previously meant that all the profit generated in the spring and summer was subsequently lost during the winter with the result that it ended the financial year at a slight operational loss. Consequently the decision was taken to close the café in October 2007 for the winter. In retrospect this was a month too late as the park construction work had caused a reduced

volume of business earlier than normal, though the end of year situation will still result in a modest operating profit. Options are currently being explored concerning a franchise arrangement along a successful model applied in Colchester Castle Park.

At two of the other museums, Colchester Castle and Ipswich Museum, vending machines operate for the benefit of customers. Such machines have the potential to provide a small, but significant level of income. Improvements to the refreshment facilities at the Natural History Museum at Colchester are currently being implemented and it is also hoped soon to make some improvements at Ipswich Museum. Also vending machines may be a viable winter alternative at Christchurch Mansion.

In relation to catering operations regard will be taken to obtaining goods from sustainable and fair trade sources. In particular 'healthy eating' options will be taken into account.

Schools Income

At close to £80,000, charged services to schools currently provide the third largest income area for the museum service. While there is pressure to increase income this needs to be balanced against the requirement, as a Hub museum, to encourage greater schools use. It is also recognised that this is a time when schools are facing a variety of increasing budgetary pressures. Therefore, this is an area that needs careful consideration and there may in fact be pressure to reduce charges and even to remove them altogether.

Other Income Areas

Currently about £15,000 is earned annually through hiring rooms within the museum buildings for a variety of purposes. It is through Christchurch Mansion that the majority of this income is obtained, principally related to weddings. While a capacity issue, especially in relation to the Charles Gray Room in Colchester Castle, will always limit growth in this area, there is certainly some potential for further growth particularly through improved marketing.

While not an immense sum a few thousand pounds are also earned through photographic sales and permission for filming, principally in Colchester Castle. There is again certainly potential for further growth in this area and a programme to digitise more images, and make these available for sale online, could make a significant contribution here. There is also a range of other areas of income such as talks and conducting natural history surveys which can all make a positive contribution towards achieving overall income targets.

Conservation Services

It is important to understand that providing a commercial conservation service does not in any way compromise the care of the organisation's own collections. One of the two conservation posts within the service, the Colchester post, only became permanently established on the basis that the bulk of the salary cost was met by commercial income and this still remains the situation today. This post not only serves a clear need, particularly from archaeological field units, but also allowed increased investment in terms of money and staff resources in the museum collections. It also has the advantage that a significant amount of the work is undertaken on material that will, in fact, eventually come into the museum collections and thus helps ensure fewer conservation issues at the point of formal transfer.

The main potential to earn income through providing conservation services to customers principally relates to archaeological material from developer funded excavations. With the scale of development taking place in this region the customer demand is likely to remain

strong. There have been significant fluctuations in the annual volume of business, but this is in part likely to be due to a relatively narrow client base. Consequently there is a need to proactively seek new business in order to help alleviate such fluctuations. A flexible approach also needs to be developed that allows capacity to be increased as and when the need arises, such as through sub-contracting to or working in partnership with independent conservators.

As well as income from conservation of archaeological material there is other potential for income, but this needs to be carefully explored in terms of the investment needed and the levels of return. One area that does seem to be immediately viable is renting surplus bench space in the conservation laboratories for freelancers which could not only provide an income stream, but would help support the wider conservation sector. However, in order not to place undue pressure on the staff involved the conservation income target for 2008/2009 has been frozen at the 2007/2008 level and there is commitment that this will also happen in 2009/2010, though after that it will need to be reviewed.

11. The Wider Heritage

Colchester

In Colchester the museum service is also responsible for the management of many of the Borough's archaeological monuments. These range from the Town Walls to smaller sites such as the Mersea Barrow. In addition there are four monuments in the Borough managed on behalf of English Heritage: Lexden Triple Dyke, Blue Bottle Grove Dyke, St Botolph's Priory and St John's Abbey Gatehouse. While this is a highly beneficial arrangement there are certainly some ways that it could be improved. One particular area of concern lies in the fact that the mechanism for agreeing necessary, and sometimes essential, repair work can be drawn out with the result that implementing work can be significantly delayed. A faster and more streamlined system would clearly be a significant improvement.

Staff are also actively involved in the day-to-day planning process by commenting on planning applications. This is, in particular, supported by the Colchester Urban Archaeology Database (UAD) which is held and maintained by the museum service. The museum service also regularly carries out specialist work and gives advice on matters impacting on the natural heritage. A site survey of species is often necessary in order to ascertain the impact of a planning application or a site management regime on bio-diversity.

Recently the museum service, in collaboration with colleagues in the Planning and Protection Service, has produced a Heritage Strategy for Colchester which looks at a range of issues and sets an action plan. There are a number of significant issues that are identified within the strategy but, perhaps, the most critical is around the need to establish a more consistent funding mechanism in order to allow sustained investment and more effective planning especially in relation to the Town Walls.

In further developing and improving archaeological services in Colchester, and perhaps more widely, there is the possibility of exploring collaborative or partnership arrangements with others, especially Essex County Council. The current arrangement for delivering the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Essex (described below) is a good example of good collaborative working. One very specific area that needs attention is improved data transfer between the Colchester UAD and the Essex Historic Conservation Record.

Ipswich

In Ipswich the museum service does not have the same role in relation to the wider heritage. Such services, particularly as they relate to the planning process, are provided by Suffolk County Council on behalf of Ipswich Borough Council. The museum service is, of course, willing and able to contribute and comment on specific heritage issues or wider strategies as requested or as the need arises. Also, with the changes that may take place in relation to local government organisation in Suffolk over the next three years, it is likely that the museum service will be asked to be involved in discussions over the future of matters such as archaeological planning advice.

Portable Antiquities Scheme

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is a national system for the voluntary recording of archaeological objects and it is organised through a network of county officers. In Essex, through a joint management agreement with Essex County Council, the post is hosted by the museum service in Colchester, while in Suffolk the equivalent post is hosted by Suffolk County Council. Links already exist between the two county officers and this is something that will be strengthened over the coming years. In particular, there is a need to ensure that any information concerning archaeological material brought into the Ipswich museums for identification is consistently and effectively fed into the Suffolk PAS recording system, which has not necessarily been the case over the last few years. The museum service will also contribute to any discussions about the future of this role in Suffolk, as a result of local government reorganisation, and will be supportive of whatever mechanism maintains strong and effective delivery of the scheme in the county.

As a whole the scheme is also currently being reviewed and changes considered. One possibility, under discussion, is that delivery of the programme may in future be linked to Renaissance in the Regions with Hub museums taking a lead role while another alternative being proposed is that the British Museum takes a more direct management role. Whatever the outcome the museum service will continue to be very supportive of the scheme and be prepared to work within whatever future arrangements are decided upon.

Biological Records in Essex and Suffolk

Across the country there is a system of county Biological Records Centres that provide an important function in a range of areas including the planning process, but also particularly in terms of recording and mapping changes in biological diversity. The museum service plays a supportive role in this respect in both Essex and Suffolk. In Colchester the museum service acts as the biological records centre for north-east Essex, maintaining site and species files on the biodiversity of the area. Data is acquired both from staff fieldwork and from the many, often volunteer, naturalists operating in the area. The service is currently working in partnership with Essex County Council, other Essex local authorities and a number of other organisations, to try and establish a county-wide Biological Records Centre for Essex.

In Suffolk the museum service hosts the county-wide Biological Records Centre through an inherited ad-hoc arrangement between Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk County Council. Prior to the merger Ipswich Borough Council had already identified that this arrangement was in need of review. This arrangement needs to be regularised in the form of a formal service level agreement between the museum service and the county council. Subject to the decision made in relation to Suffolk local government re-organisation, it will also be important to enter into discussion, with a range of interested parties, over the best ways of continuing the delivery of the Suffolk Biological Records Centre.

12. Wider Cultural Community

Wider Museum Community

Both Colchester and Ipswich have traditionally played a supportive role within the wider museum community of Essex, Suffolk and further afield. As a Hub museum great emphasis is placed on the service continuing and expanding this role. This should not in any way be seen as an onerous and enforced duty, but rather one that should be welcomed and embraced. Involvement in the wider museum community is not simply a one-way process, but brings real benefits to the service. Smaller organisations can often be more flexible and innovative than larger ones and consequently the joint service can often learn by working with and supporting them. Such work also provides important development opportunities for staff, particularly in giving them greater experience and understanding of the wider sector.

One of the main ways that the museum service can provide support is through the SHARE programme. SHARE stands for support, help and advice from Renaissance in the East of England. As its name suggests, SHARE is about museum professionals coming together to share knowledge and expertise in a two-way process of exchange. Share involves many Hub staff across the region who are available to offer informal advice and support to the region's museums on a wide range of specialist subjects including conservation, display, documentation, oral history, access, learning and evaluation. As a partner in the East of England Museum Hub, the museum service plays a full part in this programme which is brokered by the Museum Development Officer (MDO) network.

Another way that staff can provide support is by acting as Curatorial Advisors. This is particularly valuable in helping smaller museums work towards, or retain, Accreditation. It can also play an important part in relation to professional staff development. Consequently staff will be encouraged and supported in taking on this role.

It is important to maintain strong and effective working relationships with the current museum networks operating in Essex and Suffolk and, in particular, the county Museum Development Officers who provide a very important conduit to the wider museum community, especially the many smaller independent museums. The Museum Development Officers are often best placed to assess need and so help in targeting support. They can also play an important role in helping to provide independent evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of any support given.

In terms of the wider heritage community it is also important for the museum service to support and participate in a number of forums. One of these is the Ipswich Heritage Group which brings together a range of groups in order to share information and discuss specific issues and this could, in fact, provide a useful model to apply in Colchester. Some other significant groups include: the Museums in Essex Committee, the Association of Suffolk Museums, the Essex Museum Workers Group and the Suffolk Museums Partnership.

Friends of the Museum

At both Colchester and Ipswich there are very active 'Friends' organisations. They provide valuable support and advocacy for the service. They regularly provide funding to support museum activities, often associated with the purchase of items for the museum collections, but increasingly provide crucial help with development in other areas. Over the next few years both of the 'Friends' organisations will continue to have an important and growing role in the future health and development of the new joint museum service.

Regional and National Involvement

It is important that the museum service contributes to developing regional and national strategies being developed by various cultural, tourism and economic bodies. This can sometimes be difficult, because of workload pressures, but the service has a responsibility to contribute and does have an important and growing reputation. Consequently its perspective can be influential. This is perhaps particularly important at a time of such significant change, both regionally and nationally, in relation to the organisation of the various cultural agencies. It is very important that museums, and where appropriate specifically Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, features in many of these strategies. In order to realise some of the major ambitions set out in this plan it will be particularly important to be seen as relevant to, and figuring in, the agendas of key organisations. In this respect engaging with the Regional Development Agency (EEDA) will be critical especially in helping to draw in the major levels of external funding required.

13. Partnership, Funding, Innovation & Change

Partnership

The benefits of partnership working are well established and hardly need rehearsing, but in summary some of these are:

- Helping to bring about inward investment and a range of funding opportunities that single bodies cannot always secure
- To get better value for money and enable resources to go further
- Raising the profile of each organisation within the partnership and improving their reach and influence in wider contexts

At a local level the museum service is actively engaged in a number of long running mutually beneficial partnership arrangements of which that with Colchester Recalled and Geo Suffolk are particularly noteworthy. There are also some others that are beginning to develop and one of the most significant of these, over the next few years, is likely to be with the Ipswich Transport Museum. Some other interesting possibilities of developing areas of joint working with a range of other organisations are already emerging such as with the Ipswich Maritime Trust and the Ipswich Co-Op Education Centre. In a local context another area of particular focus will be to develop partnerships with other cultural venues in Colchester and Ipswich, especially Firstsite, the Mercury Theatre, the Colchester Arts Centre, Dance East and the Wolsey Theatre.

On a regional level the service is involved in a major partnership arrangement in forming part of the East of England Museum Hub. This partnership will only strengthen over the next few years and there will be a growing emphasis on joint initiatives that not only involve the hub partners, but draw in others from the museum sector and more widely.

At a national level it is now time for the service to move forward and begin to develop both formal and informal partnership arrangements with national institutions. This will involve particularly: the V&A, initially in the area of loan exhibitions but perhaps more widely; the British Museum, who have already been very willing to give support and advice in relation to the loan of Han dynasty terracotta figures from Xuzhou Museum in Jiangsu province, China; and the

Tate, particularly in relation to developing the Ipswich art collection in respect of the Benton End school of artists including Cedric Morris.

The museum service is also currently involved in developing a European partnership project focussing on Norman Castles. This should provide an opportunity to access European funding which could prove critical in securing the necessary match funding required to deliver a far bigger HLF grant of over £2 million in order to redevelop Colchester Castle.

Funding

In its first year of operation the joint museum service was fortunate in that it was allowed an inflationary increase in its base budget. This was a reflection of the importance both councils placed on the enterprise, particularly as it was done in the context of significant budgetary pressure. In relation to the 2008/2009 budget it has proved possible for the service to achieve a number of efficiency savings which has allowed it to deliver close to a £70,000 reduction, in real terms to the overall cost of the service. In doing this it is recognised that a museum service, within a local authority, should share in helping to resolve an overall budgetary deficit alongside other council services. The challenge for the service will now be to deliver a similar level of funding for the financial year 2009/2010 and in order to do this there needs to be particularly significant progress in some crucial areas of commercial activity, especially retail performance.

External Funding

Today there are probably more opportunities for museums to seek external funding than ever before. The expectation, from parent organisations to deliver greater levels of external funding grows yearly. This, however, comes at a time when the ability to match external funding has typically been declining due to the year-on-year reduction in development budgets. Consequently it is a growing challenge to juggle available resources and secure this external investment. In creating the initial budget for the development of the joint museum service budgets were deliberately carved out of existing funding in order to have match funding to continue to secure this external funding. At times of budgetary pressure, however, it is all too easy to cut development budgets and, though this may seem to deliver an initial saving, in the long term it reduces the ability to gain external investment and so improve services for customers and increase commercial income.

Over the next few years the service needs to realise the benefits of a whole range of external funding opportunities ranging from: developing major HLF bids for Colchester Castle (around £3 million) and Ipswich Museum (likely to around £6 million), medium-sized awards of £30,000–£100,000 (such as from the Wolfson Fund, small HLF awards and English Heritage box grants) and small grants, of a few hundred pounds to a few thousand, from a plethora of organisations. In order to do this it is necessary to embed within the organisation the ethos of continually seeking external funding opportunities and in fact many staff are already highly effective in doing this.

Innovation

In a cultural organisation it is necessary to create an environment that develops talent and encourages creativity. This is something that does not always fit comfortably within the corporate systems of an organisation such as a local authority. However, it is important that, while working within such a system which undeniably brings a range of benefits, that people are still given the freedom to be innovative and allowed to dream. It is particularly in such an environment that outstanding and groundbreaking work is produced.

In terms of innovation one area the service will be exploring over the next few years will be the opportunities for conducting a range of external consultancy work. In order to do this it may be worth setting up a distinct business unit that has its own identity. This could potentially become a significant income source.

Change

Currently the organisation of local government within Suffolk is being formally reviewed with the expectation that, whatever new arrangements are decided upon, these will come into effect on 1st April 2010. Consequently in 2010 the mechanism and framework of Suffolk local government is likely to be significantly different and this could clearly have implications for the museum service in a number of ways. It is therefore important that the service continues to demonstrate its relevance and benefits within Suffolk and be prepared to constructively enter into discussion over future arrangements in a number of areas such as Portable Antiquities, Biological Records and archaeological planning advice. The critical issue in all of these areas will be to arrive at the best outcome, both in terms of customer service and cost effectiveness, and not to become too hidebound on maintaining any particular delivery mechanism.

There is also currently a developing partnership between Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council which over the next three years, while retaining separate political arrangements, may lead to integration at officer level. The situation in relation to this will need to be kept under review as it clearly has implications for Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service as Braintree also delivers a museum service. While there is currently no immediate pressure to explore the idea of some form of extended museum arrangement, including Braintree, it would seem that there will be an inevitable requirement to do so within the lifetime of this plan. There may also be other areas that are of relevance such as archaeological planning advice. These will, however, need to be carefully considered and costed and, in relation to planning advice, it is very likely that the cheapest and most efficient option will be to continue with current procurement arrangements. There is also a likelihood that one or more approaches will be made to consider further partnerships. While such discussions are almost inevitable they, again, would need to be very carefully considered. There are no benefits in simply getting bigger for the sake of it. Any expansion must deliver clear benefits, be they improved services or cost efficiencies.

There are also other major changes currently happening including reviews of Renaissance and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The role and nature of the MLA is also about to undergo radical change and this may be linked to a wider reorientation and configuration of cultural agencies regionally and nationally. In particular this may require Regional Museum Hubs to take on additional responsibilities within the regions.

15. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partnership, and the nature of the agreement, between Colchester and Ipswich • A partner within the East of England Museum Hub and the investment that it has brought • The combined strength of the service across Colchester and Ipswich especially through the skills and knowledge of staff • The quality and the complimentary nature of the museum collections in Colchester and Ipswich • The range and nature of the museum buildings • The rich heritage of Colchester and Ipswich and surrounding areas • A strong track record and national reputation in the field of disability issues, especially in relation to consultation • The newly acquired bulk store at Heckworth Close • A track record of delivering innovative projects • A strong underlying ethos of delivering customer excellence • Strong funding support from both parent bodies • Strong track record of attracting external grants • A growing reputation nationally, especially in the context of the joint museum service as a model for others, and an increasing opportunity to influence regional and national agendas and policies • Good awareness of the benefits of business opportunities and change • Strongly supportive Friends organisations in both Colchester and Ipswich 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of partnership arrangement between CBC and IBC not necessarily fully understood or embraced by all within either council • New ways of working not fully embraced by all staff • With the growth of the organisation, internal communication not always working especially between Colchester and Ipswich • Poor organisation of office space at Ipswich • Full IT link between Colchester and Ipswich for all staff not fully established • Historic fabric of museums regularly requires emergency repair • Some longer term collections storage issues still to be resolved especially around art • Significant documentation backlog at Ipswich and severely limited access to collections database is impeding progress • Low public awareness of museums at Ipswich • Single identity not yet fully established including the lack of a joint website • Quality control systems not always working • Rapid growth, multiple projects and some delays in making appointments causing significant capacity issues and pressure • Commercial performance in some areas under achieving • Evaluation is not always consistently carried out and the results are not always fed through into action • Still some lack of understanding and resistance to ongoing change
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the continuing benefits of the joint museum service to both partners leading to continuing support • Through development and investment produce a highly motivated work force with improved skills • Through the Renaissance review to demonstrate the success and benefits of the initiative and so maintain government investment in the scheme • Through a robust planning framework and management of resources continue to deliver high quality projects • More fully realise the exciting potential of IT both for customers and staff • With a strong commercial approach, to more fully realise income potential leading to reduced service cost coupled with higher levels of investment • Build on existing success in the area of disability and develop services and expertise in other areas • By effectively engaging with young people to act as a positive force in their lives • Through community engagement increase audiences, both in terms of volume and diversity • Conduct transformational redevelopment projects at Colchester Castle and Ipswich Museum • Develop even closer and stronger working relationships with Hub Partners • Develop strong and lasting national and international partnerships • Develop a business unit that has the potential to act as a significant source of income, leading to increased investment in services • Create an organisation that has the flexibility to adapt to changed priorities and political shifts, and act as a catalyst and role model for others to embark similar changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to demonstrate the continuing benefits of the joint museum service to both partners leading to dissolution • Through the Renaissance review, the failure to demonstrate its benefits and effectiveness and so causing the initiative to be reduced or cancelled • Trying to do too much with insufficient capacity leading to weak planning and poor quality delivery • Failure to explore and develop the exciting opportunities of IT leading to the organisation being left behind and not adapting to the changing ways people increasingly access culture • Failure to resolve longer term storage issues could threaten future care of the collections and ultimately Accreditation status, with all that that entails • Failure to effectively adopt a green agenda leading to higher costs and detrimental impact on society • Failure to meaningfully engage with our users and partners could lead to loss of support • Failure to engage constructively, and be open to different ways of delivery, in the changing political landscapes could lead to poorer preservation and management of the area's heritage and reduced service to the community • Economic downturn leading to declining visitor numbers • Failure to adapt to competition and changing customer demand leading to declining audiences and reduced income

16. Key Issues

Deriving from the discussion sections and the SWOT analysis a number of key issues can be highlighted:

- **Embedding the shared vision and values within the service**
- **Spatial Issues, including office space and collections storage**
- **To make rapid improvements to IT infrastructure and to more fully realise the opportunities provided by the rapid developments in Information Technology**
- **The need for a strong co-ordinated planning framework**
- **The need for increased engagement with young people**
- **A continuing need to effectively demonstrate and communicate the relevance of museum services**
- **The need to continue to deliver cost efficiencies and demonstrate value for money**
- **Making the clear case that maintains investment levels and draws in major external funding**
- **The need to respond positively and flexibly to the changing organisational and political landscape, locally, regionally and nationally, that the service operates within**

17. Targets for Achievement

Governance Framework

- ***We believe that working together across Colchester and Ipswich, in equal partnership, can only be of benefit to both councils and communities***

Governance

- Review the Joint Committee Agreement in the light of experience and any changes resulting from local government reorganisation in Suffolk and see if any changes need to be made or any improvements are possible
- Contribute as appropriate to the development of future Corporate Plans and strategies of both Colchester and Ipswich, particularly through demonstrating the continuing importance of cultural activity in contributing to corporate priorities

Renaissance in the Regions

- Contribute as appropriate to the review of Renaissance being conducted by MLA
- Conduct all necessary work, including particularly consultation with the wider museum community, in order to deliver the next Hub Business Plan

Other Governance Arrangements

- Continue to explore the pros and cons of different governance arrangements, including trust status

One-Staff

- ***We believe in valuing and utilising the wide variety of talents, perspectives and experiences of all staff in a cross-service style of working termed 'One-staff'***

Staff Structure and Recruitment

- Complete the appointment of all new and vacant posts as fast as possible in order to speed the development of the service and reduce pressure on existing staff
- Explore the feasibility and, subject to this, the implementation of the appointment of a Special Projects Officer to help with the major funding bids
- Review all posts against the MA salary guidelines

Staff Development

- All individual training and continuing professional development requirements identified, as part of Personal Development Plans, to be brought together in a co-ordinated Organisational Training and Development Plan
- The museum service will in particular actively encourage and support staff who are working towards becoming an Associate or Fellow of the Museums Association (AMA and FMA)
- Embed the 'One-staff' philosophy and reinforce the cross-service style of working and team ethos within the organisation

- Develop more widely leadership skills within the organisation, both within the Museum Management Team and more widely in order to develop future leaders

Communication

- Sustain and ensure the continued effectiveness of the current communication arrangements (such as weekly update meetings and fortnightly team meeting) and develop new arrangements (such as a staff e-newsletter)
- Re-launch the 'Buddy Scheme' across the whole service and hold Diagonal Slice team meetings at Colchester and Ipswich once every 6 months

Workforce Diversity

- Progress the actions in the Workforce Diversity Action Plan for the service
- Pilot the Bill Kirby Traineeship for a disabled person on work placement as part of the Museum Association's Diversify programme
- All staff to have undertaken at least one form of Equality and Diversity training during the lifetime of the plan

Volunteers and Work Placements

- Sustain the current annual levels of work placements
- Continue to actively encourage volunteers and, in particular, establish volunteer groups in a range of areas, but particularly to assist with the archaeology, natural sciences and costume collections and to help with the documentation of the Ipswich collections
- Develop a strategy to more effectively offer work experience placements to students/adults with disabilities
- Offer a place to at least one conservation internship per year

Collections Management

- ***We believe that collections, and the buildings in which they are displayed, are central to our purpose and that it is our mission, not only to preserve and manage them, but also to unlock and communicate their stories***

Collections Development

- Focus the development of the Ipswich art collection, in terms of 20th-century works, on the Benton End Group and Ipswich Art School in order to become a centre for the study of the works of the artists associated with them, subject to funding approval by the 'Collections for the Future' project
- Continue the print collecting initiative at Colchester
- Continue to develop the collections in order to represent contemporary society and capture 'hidden histories'

Collections Management

- Produce a new Acquisition and Disposal Policy for Ipswich and review the current one for Colchester so that: the two fully mesh, there is a clear focus for future development, proper procedures are followed, they reflect other changing circumstances and priorities
- Produce an agreement over collecting areas in Suffolk, particularly in relation to archaeological archives
- Develop an effective Disaster Planning framework for the whole service and, in particular, complete the establishment of 'disaster cupboards' and train all staff in disaster procedures
- Ensure all staff understand and follow one set of procedures for collections management

Documentation

- Have in place an Ipswich Documentation Plan and procedure manual
- Review of collections database across the whole service
- Develop a strategy for the creation of, preservation and licensing of digital images
- To have a particular focus on digitising key topographical photographs in the collections and the work of selected local artists and to have images of all oil paintings at Colchester and Ipswich on-line. Secure funding for the digitisation of works of art
- Make the collections database at Colchester fully on-line and devise a plan for achieving the same at Ipswich

Conservation

- Establish and maintain a procedure for an integrated Pest Management System in all stores and museum galleries
- Conduct a review of the current Conservation service and facilities in relation to internal needs
- Review environmental conditions in all buildings and in particular establish an effective environmental control system in Hollytrees Museum
- Review and improve the storage of modern material (e.g. plastics) in the collections

Storage

- Maximise space within existing stores and carry out any necessary investment at the Annexe and ISH stores in Ipswich, and continue the ongoing improvements at Heckworth Close and the MRC
- Review all existing storage provision and produce a medium and long term strategy, with particular focus on Art and Human History stores in Ipswich
- Assess any Ipswich archaeological collections currently held or received in the near future for eligibility for English Heritage box grants
- Devise a prioritised action plan for repacking key areas of the collections, particularly in relation to the Ipswich archaeology and social history collections and the Colchester costume collection

Archaeological Archives

- Take a leading role, and support others, in helping to produce a region-wide storage strategy
- Complete the transfer of all archaeological archives from Ipswich currently held by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service which are available for deposition
- Establish nature and timescale in relation to the remaining material held by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Field Unit and support them, as far as practicable, in resolving their major publication backlog
- Lead a pilot project dealing with the rationalisation of archaeological archives (progress will, however, be dependent on securing additional funding)

Rationalisation

- Adopt the approach promoted by the Museums Association through its two reports *Collections for the Future* and *Making Collections Effective* and its 2008 Disposal Toolkit
- Adopt the Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service's model of continuous assessment of collections
- Review the documentary archives held by the museum service in Colchester and Ipswich to see whether some are best held by the Essex Record Office or the Suffolk Record Office and transfer where appropriate

Loans

- Implement recommendations made by the Museums Association in its two reports *Collections for the Future* and *Making Collections Effective*
- Review all external loan agreements and ensure an annual review process

Interpretation

- ***We believe that we have a vital role as storytellers in unlocking and communicating the stories of the collections, buildings and histories that we hold in trust on behalf of the community***

Interpretation

- Establish an overall ten-year development framework for all of the museums
- Establish a three-year rolling temporary exhibition programme, including a checklist for developing exhibitions
- Continually review IT developments to ensure that best use is made of technology in terms of creativity and access
- Develop the museum website so that it acts as an archive for films and events produced by the museum service
- Establish a more effective system of maintenance and quality control of the displays and, in particular, reintroduce the system of annual 'spruce up weeks' at each museum

Colchester Castle

- Complete the vision, outline scheme and timescale to completely redisplay and modernise all public facilities in order to transform Colchester Castle from an excellent museum to an outstanding one
- Carry out all necessary feasibility work to fully develop the scheme including: producing an energy efficient heating system, a design for new public toilet facilities and retail area, carrying out a programme of public consultation, appointing a design firm to work up a detailed display proposal and appointment of a Project Officer to help compile and manage the bid
- Secure the necessary funding (c. £750k) to act as match funding for an Heritage Lottery Fund bid of c. £3m
- Submit a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund

Hollytrees

- Create a larger temporary exhibition space in the former period room
- Produce a development plan for the ongoing use of the museum

Natural History Museum (All Saints)

- Complete the redisplay element funded by the Wolfson Scheme
- Produce a development plan for the ongoing redisplay of the museum

Tymperleys

- Refresh the existing displays
- Produce a medium and long term development proposal that looks at the future use of the whole building

Christchurch Mansion

- Redevelop the ground floor Victorian wing to include temporary exhibition space
- Redisplay the Wolsey Art Gallery to incorporate Constable related material from the Colchester collection and other material held at Ipswich so that it becomes the regional focal point to see the works of John Constable and to learn more about his life
- Produce a longer term development plan for the ongoing redisplay of the museum and larger scale infrastructure improvements including an enlargement of the current café

Ipswich Museum

- With external funding, create a new Egyptian Gallery and establish a temporary Roman Gallery
- Update and enliven the galleries generally including significant improvements to Ogilvie Bird Galleries
- Produce a vision, an outline scheme and a timescale to transform Ipswich Museum into a world class visitor attraction
- Secure funding for, and carry out, all necessary feasibility to fully develop the scheme

- Secure the necessary funding (c. £1.5m) to act as match funding for an HLF bid of c. £6m
- Submit a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund

Ipswich Town Hall

- Complete the refurbishment of Gallery 3
- Conduct interim improvements to the entrance area, internally and externally, to encourage increased public use of the Town Hall and encourage visits to the other museum venues
- Contribute to a longer term integrated development plan in partnership with the appropriate officers within Ipswich Borough Council

External Interpretation

- Create a new visitor experience and heritage asset around the Colchester Roman Circus through a funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund
- Contribute to the wider heritage interpretation of Colchester, including the design of new interpretation for Colchester Castle Park
- Create an annual programme of exhibitions in non-traditional spaces
- Work in partnership with others to incorporate heritage and museum elements in other developments (e.g. working with firstsite to transfer the Berryfield Roman mosaic into the Visual Arts Facility and working with the Ipswich Historic Churches Conservation Trust to incorporate museum items into St Peter's Church)

Research and Publications

- Publish an evaluation of the 'Life Beyond the Label' project
- Produce a draft text for the Colchester Castle Monograph
- Produce a strategy and action plan in relation to a series of popular guidebooks linked to the museums

Engaging Young Minds

- ***We believe that it is essential to meaningfully engage with young people in ways that: positively impact on their learning, inspire them, help them develop and release talent and creativity, and promote feelings of self worth, pride and belonging.***

Every Child Matters

- Review all learning provision to ensure it reflects the needs and aspirations of 'Every Child Matters' and 'the Children's Plan' initiatives
- Be prepared to enter into any pilot arrangements associated with the 'Unlocking talent' initiative centred around giving five hours of quality arts and culture for every child

Schools Learning

- Create a sustainable Extended Schools Programme initially through a pilot project

- Build on the existing early years programme and roll out across more museum sites
- Create a sustainable and relevant learning programme for schools in Ipswich
- Create an INSET support programme for teachers of ITT students as part of the Real Teaching Programme

Events

- Devise and deliver an inclusive and accessible all-year-round events programme at Colchester and Ipswich which reflects and supports national and regional initiatives as well as supporting internal exhibitions and projects

Information Technology

- Continue to investigate the opportunities provided by mobile technology and the internet for engaging with and providing services for young people

Young People on the Edge

- Continue the relationship with Southend Museums working with children at risk of exclusion
- Continue to work with the North East Essex Fostering Team building on the highly successful projects 'FAT Heritage' and '100 United project'
- Devise and deliver a similar working relationship with the Suffolk Adolescent Fostering Team in Ipswich
- Deliver a range of projects in partnership with the Behavioural Support Services Unit and other museums to address the needs of young people at risk of exclusion, particularly children and families

Audience Development & Engagement

- ***We believe in delivering customer excellence and providing services that are inclusive and accessible to the range of our diverse audiences***

Community Engagement

- Complete existing 'Museum to Go' project, and investigate options and establish a means for its continuation in some form
- Continue to deliver projects focussing on an aspect of 'Hidden Histories' including one or more related to homelessness
- Pilot a project on family literacy in Tiptree as part of the RecCreate programme and then deliver a fuller project in the following year
- Deliver a project in partnership with Colchester Garrison and use this as the basis for a longer lasting arrangement
- Deliver a project in partnership with Chelmsford Prison and use this as the basis for developing a longer-lasting and sustainable relationship with the wider prison community in Essex and Suffolk.

- Build on the community engagement made through the 'Coming to Ipswich' project with follow up projects in order to develop a positive and developing relationship with the African and Caribbean populations in Ipswich
- Sustain engagement with the Chinese community in Colchester and Ipswich in both towns through a series of projects
- Develop a similar lasting relationship with the growing Polish and Portuguese populations in both Colchester and Ipswich
- Improve current and devise new Adult Learning provision
- Continue to sustain and develop contacts with older audiences through reminiscence work and loan box schemes operating from Ipswich and Colchester.

Disability Access

- Work with IBC to install a lift at Christchurch Mansion to enable improved access to all public spaces
- Continue to improve provision for visitors with disabilities through a variety of means
- Seek to introduce dedicated Front of House Access Assistants at both Colchester and Ipswich museums to help deliver an increasing range of facilities/tours
- Produce Disability Action Plans for all museums
- Stage an innovative national/international access conference every two years with an equally innovative access related event in alternate years
- Focus on Mental Health as an area for particular attention, both in the delivery of specific projects but also for integration into longer term service development
- Further develop the pilot project funded by MLA in relation to a Disability History Subject Specialist Network and investigate becoming the national co-ordinator, particularly through hosting a web-based forum
- Develop a partnership project, as part of the Cultural Olympiad, that will look at the history and development of the Paralympics

Customer Excellence

- Develop an internal tailored training programme linked to customer care
- Continue to support the ICS awards scheme currently being operated by CBC

Marketing

- Create a strong and identifiable brand for the joint service
- Create a new and improved branded website for the combined service
- Produce a rolling three-year Marketing Plan

Consultation

- Conduct a range of research and consultation exercises, particularly in relation to Ipswich, in order to help and influence service improvement and development

- Gather further demographic data for visitors and non-visitors and the surrounding catchment area
- Revitalise and re-launch PORTAL, the service's disability consultation group in Colchester, and establish an equivalent in Ipswich
- Before the end of the lifetime of this plan to have commissioned a follow-up to the research conducted by RCMG into the attitudes of disabled people to museums and heritage, and in particular to measure and evaluate the work of the museum service in this area

Organisational Effectiveness

- ***We believe in the need for strong performance and financial management in order to ensure high standards and effective service delivery***
- ***We believe that we have a community responsibility to deliver and develop our services in as sustainable a manner as we can and, in doing so, act as an example to others***

Business Management

- Install a single telephone network across the whole service
- Establish a single IT network across the whole service which takes account of the requirements of staff at both Colchester and Ipswich
- Review and produce a prioritised IT action plan for further investment
- Overhaul electronic file management to ensure that most effective use is being made of shared drives
- Conduct a complete review of the Business Support Team

Information Technology

- Produce an overarching IT strategy for the service which brings together the range of specific actions and ambitions set out throughout the plan and which will help to prioritise the areas for investment
- Create a properly integrated IT system across both Colchester and Ipswich

Buildings Management

- Maintain effective communication with appropriate IBC officers, particularly through quarterly buildings liaison meetings
- Support the changing arrangements at Colchester in relation to the management and funding of the buildings' Repairs and Maintenance Programme
- Complete the upgrade and re-organisation of the Museum Resource Centre currently being undertaken
- Conduct a major re-organisation of office space at Ipswich Museum
- Review office space at Christchurch Mansion and consider initial changes followed by an exploration of a more extensive reorganisation involving the attic floor

- Help develop a new CCTV system for Christchurch Mansion
- Conduct security reviews of all buildings

Health and Safety

- Produce a strong Health and Safety framework covering the whole service
- Improve the organisation within all of the Conservation laboratories
- Review all arrangements and facilities for handling and storing chemicals and, in particular, identify unwanted material, carry out all the appropriate steps for disposal, and upgrade the current stores.

Sustainability

- Commit to reducing the overall carbon footprint of the museum service by more than 5%
- Ensure that the redevelopment of Colchester Castle is a model of sustainability in the context of a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade I Listed Building
- Fully commit to the CBC 'Turn It Off' campaign and other corporate initiatives
- Contribute to IBC sustainability initiatives as appropriate
- Nominate a staff 'Green Champion'
- Use the Natural History Museum as a venue to present and discuss the issues around global warming and the green agenda

Performance Management

- Provide figures annually for the Essex, Suffolk and regional benchmarking systems
- Continue to collect all the relevant data currently covered by the Best Value Performance Indicators for Museums
- Ensure Accreditation submissions are submitted to meet the required deadline for both museum venues in Ipswich and continue to conduct all necessary procedures and actions in order to maintain ongoing Accreditation status for all of the service's museums
- Submit a Designation bid in relation to the art collection at Ipswich
- Continue subscriptions to the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme and develop a more robust review process

Commercial Development

- ***We believe, while firmly adhering to core principles of fair access, in having a commercial approach that seeks to maximise income opportunities in order to be both cost effective and improve service delivery***

Colchester Castle Admissions

- Maintain a minimum of two free entry events every year

Retail

- Conduct an interim refit of all the retail spaces at Ipswich and produce longer term development plans for all the Colchester venues, including a new design and significant enlargement for the Colchester Castle shop as part of the Castle HLF bid
- Conduct a complete review of retail performance and delivery, and produce a series of targeted recommendations for rapid improvement

Catering and Vending

- Progress a franchise option in relation to the delivery of the Christchurch café and closely monitor and review the arrangement
- Explore improvements and extension to vending options in all the museum buildings

Hiring

- Assess the viability of a corporate loans scheme and establish if appropriate
- Grow the corporate hiring and wedding business, and look to develop this further based on identified customer needs

Photographic Services

- Significantly increase the numbers of available digital images and develop the means for online purchasing

Conservation

- Produce a commercial Business Plan for conservation services in order to meet income targets

Donations

- Explore the options for changing current arrangements in relation to public donations collected in the museum buildings at Ipswich
- Look at improving, and increasing the number, of public donations boxes in all venues

The Wider Heritage

- ***We believe in playing an active part in managing and caring for the wider human and natural heritage of the area***

Colchester Heritage Management

- Implement the Targets for Achievement contained in the 'Built Heritage Strategy for Colchester' in conjunction with other parts of Colchester Borough Council
- Implement the 2007 Management Plan for the Town Walls, particularly concentrating on the Roman Road and Balkerne Hill/Middleborough stretches

- Continue to implement current management plans for the various archaeological sites and monuments in Colchester, and conduct appropriate revision when these are due or if circumstances significantly change
- Produce new management plans as appropriate, including Mersea Mount (December 2008) and Lexden Mount (December 2009)
- Discuss and negotiate possible improvements to the current arrangements under which CBC manages several sites on behalf of English Heritage in order to achieve a more responsive and streamlined process
- Complete the publication of the 1995-1999 excavations at Gosbecks in conjunction with the Colchester Archaeological Trust
- Contribute to discussions over improvements to managing the historic built environment in Colchester
- Contribute to the working party producing the Colchester Local Development Framework
- Establish a mechanism for sustaining the Colchester Urban Archaeology Database

Ipswich

- Be prepared to contribute to wider heritage related issues in Ipswich as appropriate

Portable Antiquities Scheme

- Continue to directly deliver the Essex component of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and maintain a strong and effective relationship with the Suffolk scheme
- Contribute positively and openly to changing ideas over the national delivery of the scheme

Natural History

- Contribute to a review of Wildlife Sites being conducted by ECOS in Essex
- Contribute to the working party producing the Colchester Local Development Framework
- While having no formal role, contribute in similar ways in Ipswich and Suffolk as appropriate and as requested

Biological Records

- Support the developing partnership arrangements in Essex trying to establish a single county Biological Records Centre
- Regularise the agreement with Suffolk County Council in regard to hosting the Suffolk Biological Record Centre through a service level agreement
- Contribute to the discussions over the future delivery of the Biological Records Centre in Suffolk in the light of changes to local government

The Wider Cultural Community

- ***We believe that supporting and working with the wider museum community is not only our duty but also adds to the well-being of the organisation***

Wider Museum Community

- Support and encourage staff to take on the role of Curatorial Advisors and in particular recognise this as part of their core function
- Ensure that the museum service is represented at, and positively contributes to, relevant county and regional meetings and forums
- Maintain or increase the number of staff who are part of the SHARE Programme (Natural Science, Costume, Collections Management, Disability Access Advice, Learning, Marketing and Outreach)
- Continue to provide secretarial support to the Ipswich Heritage Group and explore the idea with relevant parties concerning the creation of a Colchester Heritage Forum

'Friends' of the Museum Service

- Continue to maintain and develop the strong and positive relationships with the Friends organisations in Colchester and Ipswich

Regional and National Involvement

- Contribute to the sub-regional, regional and national research frameworks, especially in relation to archaeology and natural history
- Contribute as appropriate to the development of future plans, policies and strategies of appropriate sub-regional (e.g. Haven Gateway Partnership), regional (e.g. MLA East of England and EEDA), and national organisations (e.g. MLA, Museums Association, DCMS)

Partnership, Funding, Innovation and Change

- ***We believe that is vital to take an outward looking perspective that proactively seeks partnership and funding opportunities***
- ***We believe that it is important to strive to be innovative and to positively embrace change***

Partnership

- Sustain local partnerships made through outreach and learning projects
- Establish links with Higher Education establishments in the area, particularly Essex University (in relation to the Gallery Studies course) and Anglia Ruskin University (in relation to ITT students and encouraging their future use of museums as learning resources)
- Build relationships with Children and Young Peoples' Services in the area in order to ensure museums have an influence on decision making
- Continue to play an active role as a partner in the East of England Hub
- Strengthen links with key national museums, particularly the V&A, the British Museum and the Tate
- Continue to be involved in the developing European Norman Conquest Trail

- Forge and sustain links with Xuzhou Museum and possibly other museums in Jiangsu province, China

Funding

- Maximise benefits from known forthcoming grant opportunities, such as the annual round of the Wolfson Fund
- Ensure an organisational ethos that identifies and actively pursues potential external funding sources, whether small, medium or large

Innovation

- Create an environment that develops talent, encourages creativity and leads to innovation
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Business Unit to deliver, in particular, consultancy services to the museum sector and more widely

Change

- Adopt a flexible and positive approach in relation to the changing political landscape. particularly in relation to the local government reorganisation in Suffolk and the developing relationship between Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council
- Respond positively, but realistically, to other approaches or opportunities for shared service delivery