



## London Cultural Improvement Programme

### Heritage Change Programme

#### 5. Case studies

#### 5.3 London Boroughs of Camden and Islington: Heritage, Local Studies and Archives

## Heritage Change Programme

### Pilot Case Study – London Boroughs of Camden and Islington: Heritage, Local Studies and Archives

#### Application of the Options Appraisal and Business Case tools

#### Background

The Camden Local Studies Centre and Archive is part of the wider Camden Library Service, which needs to make savings of £2.0 million in the period 2010 to 2014. £400k of savings have been identified in 2011/12, leaving £1.6 million to be found in the two years following to 2014. The original plan was to generate at least £150k of savings from the Local Studies Centre and Archive's budget of c.£300k but in June 2011 this was scaled back to £75k of savings.

Islington's Heritage Service is part of the wider Islington Library & Heritage Service. In 2011/12, there will be savings plus £430K and further savings over next two years but members have pledged not to close libraries and not to reduce opening hours. This creates pressure on Heritage Services to generate efficiency savings.

In short, both services are facing similar challenges:

- significant budget reductions
- possible reduction in staffing with consequent impacts on public service
- reduction in collection space. This is a challenge for both services as both Councils are going out to public consultation for their Library services and restructuring may result in building closures
- reduction in external funding streams that the services currently rely on and a reduction in opportunity because less funding is available.

#### Why did Camden and Islington turn to the Heritage Change Programme?

Given these challenges, the two Councils wanted to explore the feasibility of, and options relating to, the merging of their Heritage Services. It was agreed that a business case should be developed which explored options for both partners to consider.

*During the course of the pilot project, Camden's Cabinet resolved to retain the Camden Local Studies and Archive Service within Camden. As such, the options for a merged service were reduced considerably. So the project's focus shifted onto retaining each Council's public-facing services in their current format, while exploring the sharing of long-term storage and other efficiency improvements.*

## The process

A simple three stage process was proposed.

1. The first stage was to undertake a current state review. This was a desktop exercise using published strategies, plans, budgets and performance measures. The resulting information was shared with the client team via a workshop session, enabling the outputs to be checked and compared between the two authorities.
2. The second stage was to examine options. Again, a workshop format was used to develop a collaborative approach to creative thinking and problem solving. One of the agreed principles was that 'form should follow function' – in other words, the shape of a new service should reflect what it needed to do, rather than the other way around. Thus the client team first discussed the functions of a combined service, and then the possible forms that could deliver those functions. The 'forms' provided the emerging options for service delivery.
3. The third stage was to prepare a business case, or more precisely to 'identify and prioritise key activity required to enable the Council[s] to develop the business case following the current state review.' The key activities were identified in each chapter of the business case and summarised at the end as a series of 'next steps'.

## How the HCP tools were applied

The main tools used were the guidance on business case development and the guidance on options appraisals, part of the 'New Ways of Working' suite of support.

Building on the current state review and the emerging options, a 'skeleton' business case was prepared. Its purpose was two-fold: to structure information about the two Councils' Heritage Services, and the proposed merged service, using a standard business case template; and to identify the key activities which needed to be undertaken by both Councils in order to develop the business case more fully.

These 'key activities' turned the skeleton business case from a theoretical exercise into a practical, working document. The skeleton business case drew on the HCP guidance for its format and content, combining aspects of a high level business case and a strategic business case.

The guidance on options appraisals was also used within the business case. The '10 key stages of an options appraisal' was useful in highlighting what work had already been undertaken and what still needed to be done, with the latter items being added to the 'key activities' list. It is worth noting that moving from a long list of options to a short list was straightforward – the 'front runner' options were obvious, along with those which were unlikely to succeed. However, evaluating the short list was much more involved and a significant amount of technical work was identified.

## Lessons learned from the Camden and Islington pilot

A number of lessons have been learned from this pilot:

- the need for a full and frank sharing of information at the start of the project – something which both authorities were fully committed to
- the need to review and align service objectives when a merger or collaboration is being considered. Local Government Improvement and Development's ['logic model'](#) proved very useful here
- the need to consider function before form – not jumping to conclusions about how a new service might look before its purpose was understood
- the need for a standard and logical template when preparing a strategic document such as a business case
- the need not only to identify gaps in information but to address those gaps via challenging questions and activities
- the recognition that the political process can change the direction of a project overnight, so being flexible and having a wide range of options is important.

**Mike Clarke, Camden's Head of Library Customer Services said "The approach developed by SLC in consultation with Camden and Islington was really helpful to understanding the costs, drivers and risks. While Camden has decided to retain its archive collections in-borough, we have a better understanding of the options available to us, and their possible benefits. This approach could work well for other authorities looking at shared or joint provision."**

**Rosemary Doyle, Islington's Head of Library and Heritage Services said "This process has really helped us focus on options for future service management and operational delivery. The support from SLC ensured we covered a lot of ground in a short timescale"**

### To view all the HCP tools

The Heritage Change Programme has a wide range of tools and advice to help you develop your heritage service. For more information and to access the resources go to <http://bit.ly/gcuv6i>