

Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

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Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan

1. Contacts

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2. Executive Summary

This report seeks approval, for public consultation, of the Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan and seeks Members views on the possibility of appointing a Heritage Champion to promote the interests of the historic environment in all aspects of council decision making.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the Cabinet agree the principles and approach to achieving protection and conservation of the historic environment within the district as set out in the draft Historic Environment Strategy and Action Plan, attached as an Appendix to this report and agree its scope and content for the purposes of public consultation.**
- 3.2 That views be expressed on the potential of reviving the role of Heritage Champion either as a single member Champion or a series of Champions covering a group of wards.**

4. Background

- 4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, states at paragraph 126 that “local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats”. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:
- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;

- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
- 4.2. The Draft Historic Environment Strategy is intended to meet these requirements and to ensure that the council continues to meet its duties and responsibilities having regard to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 4.3. This is a shared commitment; the council cannot work alone. As noted in English Heritage's 'Conservation Principles' document (2008), the historic environment is a shared resource. Conserving the Districts heritage assets requires broad public support, understanding and indeed involvement. The Conservation Strategy will provide for wider community involvement in respect of the historic environment. The council is proud of the Districts diverse cultural heritage, for which the District is well known. It seeks to make best use of this considerable asset, and through the publication of this strategy, to prioritise our work for the continued conservation and enhancement of this heritage.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1. Improved awareness and understanding of the District's historic environment and prioritised actions for conservation to maximise use of available resources. The document provides a basis for future policy development and provides the Council's response to the recommendation in the NPPF for setting out a positive strategy for future conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
- 5.2. To provide a basis for ensuring that development or change affecting the historic environment is appropriate in terms of its impact and to ensure appropriate policies and programs of work are developed and put in place for its management.

6. Proposal

- 6.1. The draft Strategy has been prepared to confirm the importance the Council attaches to the historic environment and to outline our approach to raising awareness of the importance of the historic environment and to ensure that we achieve its conservation in a positive way. The Strategy is intended to underpin the Local Plan as recommended in the NPPF. It includes an Action Plan setting out our approach and a means for identifying priorities for future work of the Conservation and Design service. It is proposed that the plan will be supported by an Action Plan programme which would be reviewed on an annual basis, linked to the Council's Service Plan.
- 6.2. The draft Strategy embraces all aspects of the historic environment including the built environment, archaeological remains or features and man-made landscape and recognises that it is dynamic and changes over time. It will be supported by a more detailed action plan setting out prioritising actions linked to Strategic Priorities to secure best use of available resources to achieve the Strategy objectives.

- 6.3. The draft Strategy describes and explains the various powers, processes and tools available which can contribute to conserving the historic environment and sets out our approach to their use to secure positive conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The draft Strategy relates to the Local Plan area of Chichester District. While it will not apply to the South Downs National Park, it will cover the services the District Council provides to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) in relation to the historic environment. It also sets out areas of work to secure proactive conservation of the Districts heritage assets. These include advice on development proposals, preparation of conservation area appraisals, use of Article 4 Directions, approaches to Heritage at Risk and preparation of technical guidance.
- 6.4. The protocol also sets out an underpinning set of objectives and priorities, however, they are not fixed and will be re-examined and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain current and relevant.
- 6.5. The aim of the draft strategy is to provide a clearly defined approach to the conservation of the historic environment and to give developers certainty about the Council's procedures for assessing proposals and the processes we will employ.

7. Historic Environment Champion

- 7.1 The Council previously had a Historic Environment Champion, a post most recently held by Councillor Janet Duncton, but this role was revoked.
- 7.2 The Planning Task and Finish Group discussed the role of Historic Environment Champion, and in response to a suggestion of the group, officers put forward a number of options for discussion, as follows.
 - Option 1: A single Historic Environment Champion: The Historic Environment Champion would ensure that the historic environment is properly considered when key decisions are taken and work to identify opportunities where it can make a contribution to wider corporate objectives.
 - Option 2: Each Ward member, or a member covering a group of wards, given a specific Historic Environment responsibility: The members would have a distinct role in promoting and protecting the historic environment within their area. They could provide closer working relationships with Parish/Town Councils who could act as eyes and ears on the ground as a means of providing a conduit for keeping the Council informed of local issues, including heritage crime and heritage at risk.
- 7.3 A more detailed assessment of these two options is attached at Appendix 2 to this report. Cabinet's views are sought on whether either option should be pursued in more detail.

8. Alternatives Considered

- 8.1. Alternatives could include the preparation of an Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This draft Strategy could form the basis of a future SPD should a decision be taken to prepare one.

9. Resource and Legal Implications

- 9.1. The draft Strategy has been prepared in house within existing staff resources. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10. Consultation

- 10.1. The Historic Environment Strategy was one of the three areas of planning within the Service Plan to be looked at by the Planning Task and Finish Group. The group reviewed the draft document and made a number of recommendations, including consultation with the South Downs National Park, in terms of the extent to which and how it should relate to the National Park. The draft was also restructured through the process to more closely reflect the structure of the Council's Design Protocol..
- 10.2. In response to the Task and Finish Group recommendation a copy of the draft Strategy was sent to the Cultural Strategy Lead and Local Plan Lead at the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and they have confirmed that the SDNPA would be happy to regard the strategy as a Chichester District Council initiative with limited bearing on the National Park, so would simply seek to encourage consistency within it, in places where the Park is mentioned. A number of suggested amendments were put forward, including a suggestion that the Strategy mentions our close partnership working with SDNPA. These changes have been incorporated into the draft strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 10.3. The document will be reviewed and updated in response to any representations received during the consultation and the final version reported back to Cabinet for final approval.

11. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 11.1. None

12. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
If you tick "Yes", list your impact assessment as a background paper in paragraph 13 and explain any major risks in paragraph 9		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder The Council has a duty "to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area". Do the proposals in the report have any implications for increasing or reducing crime and disorder? The Strategy includes recommendations for future work to tackle issues around heritage crime, probably as part of a wider rural crime reduction initiative in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding entered into with Historic England by the Community Safety Partnership in 2012.	✓	

<p>Climate Change Are there any implications for the mitigation of or adaptation to climate change? If in doubt, seek advice from the Environmental Strategy Unit (ESU).</p> <p>The Strategy includes recommendations for future technical advice notes that will include advice on improving environmental performance of traditional buildings.</p>	✓	
<p>Human Rights and Equality Impact You should complete an Equality Impact Assessment when developing new services, policies or projects or significantly changing existing ones. For more information, see Equalities FAQs and guidance on the intranet or contact Corporate Policy.</p>		✓
<p>Safeguarding The Council has a duty to cooperate with others to safeguard children and adults at risk. Do these proposals have any implication for either increasing or reducing the levels of risk to children or adults at risk?</p>		✓
<p>Other (please specify): eg biodiversity</p>		✓

13. Appendices

13.1. Appendix 1 - Draft Historic Environment Strategy

13.2. Appendix 2 - Historic Environment Champion – Options analysis

14. Background Papers

14.1. None