

WILTSHIRE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

Executive Summary

The Wiltshire County History Project is due for renewal in February 2009. The project is part of the national Victoria County History Programme, whose aim is to produce full and accurately referenced histories of England's communities, from the earliest times to the present day. The Wiltshire Project is currently funded by the County, the four Districts and the University of West of England (UWE) through a five-year agreement which ends in January 2009. UWE employ two historians to produce the Wiltshire History. To maintain continuity and production, the Project should be renewed before January 2009.

Proposal

That the Implementation Executive approve the renewal of the Wiltshire County History Project in January 2009.

Reason for Proposal

The current agreement for the Wiltshire County History Project ends in January 2009 and to continue production a new agreement has to be put in place. This report provides members with information on the Wiltshire County History Project, and asks for their approval for the renewal of the partnership agreement for 2009-14.

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WILTSHIRE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

Background

1. The Wiltshire County History Project has completed 17 histories covering two thirds of Wiltshire's communities. The histories are comprehensive and accurately cited to original sources, providing important historical reference books for the County. They are a key element of the Heritage Services provided from Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre and an important resource for each community.
2. The most recent major publication of the Wiltshire County History Project is Volume 17 for the Calne Hundred community of Berwick Bassett, Blackland, Calne including Bowood, Calstone Wellington, Cherhill, Compton Bassett, Heddington and Yatesbury. The project also carries out community research, education projects and publishes paperbacks, most recently Codford: Wool and War in Wiltshire. Both early publications and current research are uploaded on the Wiltshire Victoria County History website.
3. The national programme for county histories is co-ordinated by the University of London. Fifteen projects are currently underway and almost 250 volumes have been produced. The University of London leads on quality control and digital services, including a major website featuring all of the histories
4. Up to 2004 the project was funded by Wiltshire's local authorities. That year, the University of West of England (UWE) joined the project. In 2008-9 the County provided £39,430 of funding, District Councils £30,000 and the UWE £15,000. This funding level was agreed in 2004 and covers the direct costs of the two historians, who are UWE employees. The agreement ends in January 2009.
5. The current agreement features a non-executive Advisory Committee that meets annually, with representatives from each of the funding bodies, the University of London, local historians and supporters. The County has four member representatives on the Advisory Committee. Note that member representation on outside bodies is being separately reported to the Implementation Executive.
6. The main aim for the Wiltshire County History Project for the next five years, 2009-2014, is to complete the history of the Cricklade Hundred community of Ashton Keynes including Leigh, Cricklade St Mary, Cricklade St Sampson, Eisey, Latton, Lydiard Millicent, Marston Meysey, Purton including Braydon and Minety, Volume 18, by spring 2009, and substantially complete Volume 19 on Heytesbury Hundred including Boyton, Chitterne (All Saints and St Mary's), Codford (St Mary's and St Peter's), Brixton Deverill, Heytesbury, Horningsham, Imber, Knook, Orcheston St. George, Tytherington, and Upton Lovell; and the South Damerham hundred including Compton Chamberlayne, Longbridge Deverill, and Monkton Deverill. Longleat and the Upper Wylve Valley.

Main Considerations for the Implementation Executive

7. The current agreement has proved an effective means to deliver the County History. It is suggested that the partnership is renewed for five years by the Council, UWE and University of London. It is also proposed that the Advisory Committee continues and has member representatives who present Wiltshire Council's views on the publication programme and staff appointments.

Risk Assessment

8. The main risk to the project is from loss of staff. Early renewal of the agreement would mitigate that risk.

Financial Implications

9. UWE manage the project budget and advise that in the 2009-14 period, the forecast for direct expenditure (salaries, travel, materials) is approximately £520,645. This forecast has been carefully assessed and is considered to be accurate and economic. A five year budget will be included as a schedule to the new agreement and will be reported on annually.
10. UWE report that, along with other universities, 'Full Economic Costing' is now being applied. This calculates all indirect costs incurred by universities for projects undertaken by them. The calculation for the indirect costs of Wiltshire Victoria County History for 2009-14 is £318,083. UWE have indicated that they will cover indirect costs.
11. In 2004-2009 county and district contributions were fixed at £69,430 per annum. Direct expenditure has risen since 2004 and an annual contribution of £74,500 is now recommended, totalling to £372,500 for the full five years, to be drawn from the Libraries, Heritage & Arts budget. Although the annual contribution recommended is higher than for the previous agreement period, this will be managed within existing resources. UWE will be asked to fund the remaining direct expenditure of £148,145 over the five years. The sum of funding for direct expenditure is £520,645, giving a balanced budget.
12. UWE will be asked to report on the outturn for the period 2004-2009, transfer any balances from local authorities to the next period, 2009-2014, and confirm their funding for 2009-14. At the end of the next period, in 2014, any balances will be either returned to the partners or used to continue the County History.

Legal Implications

13. No major implications are identified.

Conclusion

14. The County History is an important element of the heritage of Wiltshire. Its renewal, as set out above, would enable this service to be effectively developed for a further five years.
15. Members' agreement is requested for the renewal of the partnership project so that officers can complete the agreement with the other partners.

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: None.

Appendices: None.