

Bourne Hall Museum

Service Review and Recommendations

May 2025

1.0 Introduction	3
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2.0 Methodology.....	4
3.0 Internal Operating Environment.....	5
4.0 External Operating Environment	8
5.0 SWOT Analysis: current position	10
6.0 Hallmarks Analysis and Recommendations	12
6.1 HALLMARK: PURPOSE.....	13
6.1.1 Recommendations	14
6.2 Hallmark: LEADERSHIP & CULTURE	14
6.2.1 Recommendations	15
6.3 Hallmark: GOVERNANCE	15
6.3.1 Recommendations	16
6.4 Hallmark: FINANCE.....	17
6.4.1 Recommendations	17
6.5 Hallmark: INNOVATION.....	18
6.5.1 Recommendations	19
6.6 Hallmark: COLLECTIONS	19
6.6.1 Recommendations	20
6.7 Hallmark: VISITOR FOCUS.....	21
6.7.1 Recommendations	22
6.8 Hallmark: AWARENESS & NETWORKS	23
6.8.1 Recommendations	23
6.9 Hallmark: TACKLING INEQUALITY.....	24
6.9.1 Recommendations	25
6.10 Hallmark: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.....	25
6.10.1 Recommendation	26
7.0 Action Plan: summary of recommendations	26
8.0 APPENDIX 1	30
Summary of future options.....	30

1.0 Introduction

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) have commissioned [REDACTED] Heritage & Museum Services to carry out a review of Bourne Hall Museum's (BHM) strategic direction and services and develop a series of recommendations for a successful future.

There continues to be huge public support for museums in the UK with an [April 2024 YouGov Poll](#) for the National Museum Directors Council reporting that 89% of adults think that museums are important to UK culture and 76% of adults think that having a local museum adds value to their area.

Bourne Hall Museum opened in 1970 in Ewell Village as a local history museum for the borough of Epsom and Ewell. It is housed on the first floor of the striking Bourne Hall (BH) which is a community facility also housing the local library and New Surrey Performing Arts Library (operated by Surrey County Council), the Flying Saucer café, performance spaces and rooms for hire. There is a wide range of community focused activity based in BH and outdoors in its attractive gardens and park space.

Bourne Hall itself is a significant modern building which was designated Grade II by Historic England in 2015

*Bourne Hall Library and Social Centre, of 1967-70 by A. G. Sheppard Fidler and Associates, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Architectural interest: a striking design, notable for its space-age flair and the generous, top-lit principal interior space; * Plan form: the circular layout is well-organised, legible and flexible; * Historic interest: as an ambitious example of the expansion of the library service and the integration of community facilities and disabled access.*

The museum collection of up to 15,000 objects covers social history, archaeology and local history material including photographs, ephemera, prints and postcards, covering the administrative boundaries of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell from 1937 onwards. The collection covers the domestic, social and commercial life of the area. It has strong collections around the history of the local traveller community and the Epsom Derby. The museum does not collect archive material which is more appropriately housed at the Surrey History Centre.

There are 1.5 FTE staff (a full time Curator and part time Education Officer post) who are supported by a group of regular volunteers and the wider Bourne Hall staff team.

Bourne Hall Museum is an Accredited Museum, meeting the nationally agreed standards set out in the [UK Museum Accreditation Scheme](#) (managed by Arts Council England) alongside [Spectrum, the UK Collections Management Standard](#) and the [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#). The museum submitted its last accreditation return in 2017 and can expect to receive an invitation to make a return (to demonstrate how it is meeting the standard) in the next 12-18 months.

2.0 Methodology

This work has been carried out in line with the proposal prepared for [REDACTED] Assistant Head of Service of Venues, Community commercial Services and [REDACTED], Arts, Culture and Heritage Programme Officer in February 2025.

It has included

- A desktop review of the museum's current planning framework
- A site visit to Bourne Hall Museum to carry out a baseline assessment
- One to one interviews with key council staff and elected members
- A workshop with museum, wider council staff and volunteers to assess current performance against the [AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums](#)
- Interviews with external stakeholders
 - [REDACTED] Surrey Cultural Partnership
 - [REDACTED], Surrey Museums Partnership
 - [REDACTED], Surrey and East Sussex, Museum Development South East

The author has taken every care to ensure information collected and given in this report is accurate, however inaccuracies or misunderstandings may have occurred.

The work on this report has been undertaken with support and insights from Epsom & Ewell Borough Council staff and the author appreciates their generous sharing of time and knowledge.

3.0 Internal Operating Environment

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's most recent [Corporate Plan](#) has 6 priority themes

- Green & vibrant. A better place to live where people enjoy their surroundings
- Safe and well. A place where people feel safe, secure and lead healthy, fulfilling lives.
- Cultural and Creative. A centre for cultural and creative excellence and inspiration.
- Opportunity and Prosperity. A successful place with a strong, dynamic local economy where people can thrive.
- Smart and connected. Alive and connected socially, economically, geographically and digitally.
- Effective council. Engaging, responsive and resilient council.

The museum has a clear fit under the Cultural and Creative theme which includes the priority to

“Promote the borough’s rich history and heritage”

which has outcomes and activities that relate directly to the work of the museum.

The museum also has the potential to contribute to wider outcomes under the cultural and creative theme and under opportunity and prosperity “promote Epsom and Ewell as a great place to live, work and study”

In 2025-2027 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council are working to deliver an additional **7 priorities**. All the priorities are mindful of changes to local government that will follow this period and focus on ensuring a meaningful legacy for Epsom and Ewell residents.

Priority 7 is the **Future of the Museum**. This will report on a set of options for the future of the museum service.

It is hoped that this report will provide valuable background to inform these options as it details the challenges facing the museum, the opportunities that can be seized to improve and develop the service and the prioritisation that is essential to deliver this. There are foundational steps that need to be taken to ensure the successful future of the museum regardless of the organisational context. Appendix 1 provides a brief outline of the impact of possible options.

The council is currently consulting on its [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2027](#) which recognises “the positive impact that art, culture and heritage can have in improving our sense of wellbeing, relieving stress and bringing about a sense of connection and purpose”

The museum has enormous potential and a renewed commitment and focus to deliver on this strategic priority. There is an established evidence base in the wider sector for the value of museums to promote health and wellbeing (the [Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance](#) showcases examples of this type of work).

The museum also has an important role to play in developing the **tourism** offer in the borough as it showcases its rich history and stories, from prehistory to the Covid pandemic, presenting the legacy of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and supporting and reflecting the future communities that it will serve. With excellent transport links it is an ideal destination for visitors from across Surrey and neighbouring London boroughs. Research undertaken in 2022 to understand the role of the cultural and creative industries in driving the local economy identified that cultural regeneration, of which a refreshed and forward thinking museum can be part, has a key role in attracting more visitors to the borough.

This research also informs the [Borough's Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy 2023-2028](#) which has a natural synergy and overlap with the work of the museum as its vision seeks to evidence

- Pride in, and knowledge of the Borough's unique history and heritage
- A clear and compelling identity which excites and inspires
- A wide range of local events and activities for people to take part in
- A place where people work together for the benefit of the community

The strategy's vision is

"To grow the role of Epsom and Ewell as a centre for cultural, creative and heritage excellence both within Surrey and beyond. By 2028 the borough will be a place recognised for its vibrant cultural provision that appeals to, represents and engages with the people who live, work, visit or study within the community."

The Arts Culture and Heritage Strategy is also highlighted as a key tool for delivery of health and wellbeing priorities and the work of the museum in this area should be interwoven in this approach.

The new Forward Plan for the museum must outline its contribution to wider council priorities and ensure that opportunities to complement the Arts Culture and Heritage Strategy and other strategic priorities are embraced. It must also identify how, with investment to update and refresh the visitor offer, the museum can offer significant value as a lead museum service to a new east Surrey authority. It is already well placed to tell the rich stories of the history of Epsom and Ewell but it can also provide advice, support and act as a key partner and advocate for the wider museum and heritage community in the east of the county.

At present, the museum sits in the Commercial Services department of the council and is managed under Venues as part of the Bourne Hall team whilst Arts, Culture and Heritage is part of the Housing and Communities department and is managed under Communities as part of the Community Development team. Although the services sit in different departments, an integrated approach to planning is essential to ensure that maximum impact in these priorities areas is achieved. Future organisational structures should consider a closer alignment between these complementary services.

The museum team consists of 1.5 FTE staff, a FT Curator and PT Museum Assistant, supported by the wider Bourne Hall staff and museum volunteers. The museum's curator

[REDACTED] and the future operation of the museum, compliance with the national Accreditation Standard and capacity to support both the legacy of Epsom and Ewell's museum service and building for the future, will depend upon professional staffing levels being maintained.

4.0 External Operating Environment

The review has been commissioned at a time of change for Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

The current structure of local government across Surrey will change from 1st April 2027 as local government is reorganised <https://www.surreylgrhub.org>

The future structure of local government in Surrey has not been decided at the time of writing but it is anticipated that either 2 or 3 unitary authorities will replace the current structure of Surrey County Council and 11 district or borough councils.

Within Surrey there is a strong, vibrant cultural sector ranging from large Arts Council supported National Portfolio Organisations through to grassroots community groups. The [Surrey Cultural Partnership](#) (SCP) is a collective from culture, heritage, local government, business, education, health and criminal justice working together to ensure that everyone in Surrey has the opportunity to participate in, engage with and contribute to extraordinary cultural activity, whoever they are and wherever they live.

SCP works with 380 cultural bodies across the county and has developed the [Surrey Cultural Strategy 2024-2034](#) which is focused on a vision that

By 2034 Surrey will be recognised as a confident, vibrant county that celebrates its rich cultural heritage and the creativity that shapes individual and community prosperity.

SCP provides an important support network for cultural practitioners and seeks to attract funding for culture. At present it is distributing the Heritage for All fund (from the National Lottery Heritage Fund) through the Community Foundation for Surrey.

There are over 40 museums in the county which are supported by the [Surrey Museums Partnership](#) (SMP). It provides a single point of contact to promote and support museums throughout the county and is funded through the County Council and District Councils (including EEBC). SMP encourages partnership working to support local, regional and national goals, advocate for the work of museums and offers funding and expertise to its members.

[Museum Development South East](#) is the Arts Council England funded body that supports the museum sector across the region, including Surrey. They offer access to professional expertise, networking, funding and development opportunities. The Surrey and East Sussex Museum Development Officer is the first point of contact for support for Bourne Hall museum

Within Epsom and Ewell there is a vibrant cultural and local history sector. The museum has well established working relationships with the Epsom and Ewell Archaeology and History Society and the Epsom and Ewell Local and Family History Centre (co-located in the library in Bourne Hall). Beyond history, there are a wealth of cultural organisations in the borough

including the University of the Creative Arts campus in Epsom, Nescot, Laine Theatre Arts and The Horton arts venue which houses a permanent exhibition on the history of Epsom's cluster of psychiatric hospitals.

It is essential that Bourne Hall Museum considers its potential role and purpose in the changing operating environment in local government in Surrey and that this is reflected in planning for 2025 onwards.

5.0 SWOT Analysis: current position

The SWOT analysis has been informed by the baseline assessment carried out on the site visit on 26-27th March 2025 and conversations with internal and external stakeholders.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
The collection is representative of key local stories A wealth of local history research has been carried out and can be drawn upon Good links with local history bodies Large scale events attract big crowds The museum club for children has a regular audience Loan boxes for schools are in regular use Popular walks programme Wider Bourne Hall team and community offer Access to green space Support of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council	No recent visitor data or research No recent non visitor consultation data Policies and plans required to meet the accreditation standard are not currently in place The collection does not reflect the contemporary population of E+E Collections database is not Spectrum compliant The name of museum does not make its offer clear The museum displays are dated and lack interactivity Small staff team of 1.5 FTE Limited marketing/social media presence
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
LGR presents an opportunity for the museum to present the legacy of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and be a lead service museums and heritage for the east of the county. Provide an advisory and support service for volunteer run museums in the east of the county. Engage more deeply with the work of the Surrey Cultural Partnership Access funding and support through the Surrey Museums Partnership and Museum Development SE Invest in and refresh the visitor offer to play a key role in the area's tourism offer. Promote the museum (and schools offer) into neighbouring London boroughs	Museum Curator role [REDACTED] LGR outcomes for the museum are uncertain (elections for the shadow councils take place in May 2026). LGR regulations will affect the ability of EEBC to make decisions re investment in the museum from Sept 2025 onwards. Being ready for the next accreditation return Succession planning (volunteers) Unable to evidence the impact of the museum without more visitor data / consultation. Absence of strong collections care (eg environmental conditions and pest monitoring) threatens collection condition. High light levels for collections on display.

Build relationships with funders and secure external grant funding for priority work Courses for adults – eg around wellbeing themes or traditional skills- can also be income generating Work in partnership with the library service More focused work with partners in E+E	Weaknesses in the documentation of collection could compromise accountability of action is not taken. The position of the museum in BH (and signage) means it is hidden from view/ not strongly promoted.
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6.0 Hallmarks Analysis and Recommendations

The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums are an excellent benchmarking and development tool to review the current position of the museum and consider and order priority areas for action. They can be used effectively by museums with independent/charitable governance structures and those managed by local authorities and universities.

They can be viewed online at <https://aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/aim-hallmarks/>

The analysis and recommendations are based on the Hallmarks workshop carried out with staff and volunteers on 27th March 2025, the consultant's baseline assessment work and conversations with internal and external stakeholders.



6.1 HALLMARK: PURPOSE

The current statement of purpose is

“Bourne Hall Museum works to promote the understanding of history in Epsom and Ewell by helping and encouraging people to encounter objects and pictures from the past”

Definition: know, articulate and embrace your purpose

You have a clear, compelling and people- oriented purpose that is shared by everyone in your organisation.

You actively use it to keep your organisation on course as it flexes and adapts to changes.

Self assessment questions

- How compelling is our purpose?
- How relevant is our purpose to a wide range of people?
- How well is it shared by everyone in our organisation?

Workshop feedback

- The bones are good but it needs va va voom
- It is maybe a bit passive eg talks about ‘encounter’
- The objects are evidence to help tell the stories of the people of E+E
- It acts as a blurb for the museum
- Needs to be more pithy
- Reflect demographics that have changed
- Promote sense of pride and sense of place
- The purpose needs revising
- Need to revisit even if it remains the same
- Need to encourage new people and new topics to bring people in
- Purpose not very well known – ‘didn’t know our purpose until we turned up today’
- Because we are a LA we can be too wordy
- Bourne Hall as whole product / museum
- The museum service/ museum site

6.1.1 Recommendations

It is considered good practice to revisit a museum's mission or vision at the beginning of each new planning cycle and the Bourne Hall statement of purpose is overdue for a review. This is a valuable opportunity to consider what the museum is aiming to achieve in the future and the impact it will have on its users. This will inform the approach for all the museum's management policies and plans.

P1 Review the museum's statement of purpose ahead of its next Accreditation return.

The review should

- **Ensure that a new statement has a strategic fit with wider corporate priorities**
- **Involve consultation with staff, volunteers, stakeholders and the wider community.**
- **Consider the relationship of the museum to Bourne Hall as a whole**
- **Consider the name of the museum- does it clearly communicate what the museum is about or the reach it has across the borough as a whole?**

6.2 Hallmark: LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Definition: create an organisational culture that can readily adapt and respond.

The leadership of your organisation is clear, directed, delegates freely and fosters a positive culture that is open to new ideas and ready to seize opportunities.

Your organisation is independent-thinking and entrepreneurial. It is focused collectively on outcomes. Key information on performance is shared within the organisation.

Self assessment questions

- How clear is everyone in the organisation about our intended outcomes and progress towards them?
- How effective are we at seizing opportunities and being entrepreneurial?

Workshop Feedback

- Our Forward Plan needs to be rewritten
- People are not clear on intended outcomes and progress
- Museum staff and volunteers are clear on intended outcomes but not wider Bourne Hall or council staff
- Outcomes and progress needs to be shared with the wider organisation
- There are no structured targets or KPIs
- There is good liaison with volunteer groups and history societies
- We have the seeds to be entrepreneurial
- Local government reorganisation will have a massive impact
- Our hands can be tied because we are a LA

- We need more collaboration with the rest of BH
- There are opportunities to work with the fashion, textile and business courses at the University of Creative Arts in Epsom.

6.2.1 Recommendations

L&C1 Prepare the museum for the future by developing a new, Accreditation compliant, Forward Plan.

The plan should

- Be informed by stakeholder consultation (internal and external)
- Be aligned to wider council priorities
- Consider shared goals with wider Bourne Hall and the Arts, Culture and Heritage Service
- Meet the [Accreditation Scheme requirements for a Forward Plan](#)
- Acknowledge the need to adapt to the changes that local government reorganisation will bring
- Be communicated and shared with staff and volunteers.
- Ensure progress and outcomes are measured and shared/discussed

6.3 Hallmark: GOVERNANCE

Definition: consciously practice good governance following Charity Commission and AIM Guidance.

All trustees are proactive advocates for the organisation and its purpose. They focus on strategic and significant issues. They avoid conflicts of interest and always wear only one hat at a time.

The trustees and senior staff or volunteers understand their different roles and work well together towards the purpose.

This Hallmark is written to align to the charitable status of independent museums but the self assessment questions have been adapted to fit with the governance of Bourne Hall Museum as a local authority run museum.

Self assessment questions

- How well do elected members, staff and volunteers work together?
- How well does our work fit with the Arts, Culture and Library Strategy and wider council priorities?

Workshop Feedback

- It's a small team at E+E. We all work well together but are stretched.
- Council decision making structures and processes can be challenging
- We all tend to work according to individual perspectives; we need to work towards common goals
- Things can be disjointed between BH and E+E BC
- The Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy works well
- There are wider challenges with volunteer recruitment post Covid

6.3.1 Recommendations

G1 The work of the museum must be clearly aligned to wider strategic priorities. This can be done through the development of the aims and objectives that direct the museum's new Forward Plan and underpin its statement of purpose.

G2. The museum service and arts, culture and heritage sit in separate council departments. There are natural synergies between these areas of work and, where possible, a joined up approach to planning and delivery should be explored to ensure that resources and impact are maximised.

G3. The museum is supported by long serving volunteers across a range of roles. Succession planning and consideration of new volunteer roles and models (eg remote and one off volunteering opportunities) should be explored.

The [Heritage Volunteering Group](#) offers guidance, inspiration and case studies on developing and implementing rewarding heritage volunteering opportunities.

6.4 Hallmark: FINANCE

Definition: be financially resilient and well managed as a charitable business.

The organisation nurtures a diversity of income sources. Some of these are predictable and it has sound business planning skills.

All leaders understand the key drivers of their business model. The organisation actively identifies, develops and utilises its assets to generate income in order to fulfil its purpose.

This Hallmark is written for a museum operating in a charity framework rather than as a local government service however similar but different financial challenges are also present for local government museums and this benchmark was used to look at where there are additional funding opportunities for Bourne Hall Museum.

Self assessment questions

- What are our financial challenges and where are there funding opportunities?

Workshop Feedback

- Challenges
 - We need enough money to deliver a (new) forward plan
 - There is a need to invest in the museum
 - Being a LA restricts access to some funding opportunities
 - There are challenges around budgets reducing
 - We need to demonstrate economic and social value
 - We don't charge for exhibitions
- Opportunities
 - Links to local businesses/organisations for possible sponsorship and grants
 - Museum shop
 - An online shop
 - Charging a refundable deposit for damages to school loan boxes
 - Look at wider grant opportunities for funding

6.4.1 Recommendations

F1 A resource plan needs to be developed to demonstrate how the new Forward Plan can be delivered. This should scope the resource required (financial, staff, expertise) and identify where this can be met from.

F2 Applying for targeted external grant funding will be essential for the museum to maintain its accredited status and develop its visitor offer.

It is understood that an application has already applied for a Surrey Museums Partnership grant for collections work but further grants will be required. This museum does not have a track record with a range of funders so relationships will need to be developed.

Funders that are aligned to the areas that Bourne Hall Museum will need to resource (in addition to the SMP) are

- [Museum Development South East](#) has a range of funds available in this financial year. An early conversation with the Surrey Museum Development Officer, [REDACTED], is recommended to help maximise these opportunities.
- Bourne Hall Museum would be eligible for the [Association of Independent Museums Collections Care and Conservation and Museum Fundamentals grants](#) if it became a member.
- [Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants](#) have different criteria for projects under and over £30K, aligned to its Let's Create Strategy. BHM could form part of a combined arts application or a stand alone museum application.
- [The Community Foundation for Surrey is distributing National Lottery Heritage Fund grants in its 'Heritage for All' fund.](#) This is a response to the Surrey Cultural Strategy and aims to help a wider range of people benefit from and engage with heritage in Surrey. Access to museums and their collections is a core theme for the fund. Local authorities are not eligible for support directly but can partner with an eligible body.
- [NLHF](#) offers grants from £10,000 to £10 million pounds and BHM should start to consider where NLHF might start to help it realise its ambitions. The first step is to access advice and support from your regional office <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/in-your-area/london-south>

It is noted that applying for funding is a time consuming activity. It is essential that the limited staff time available is directed to applications that focus on priorities identified in the forward plan and where there is a good match with funder priorities.

The Association of Independent Museums (AIM) has a good resource for helping to write effective grant applications <https://aim-museums.co.uk/writing-a-good-application/>

F3 BHM already generates income through its shop and the museum club. Further income generating opportunities should be explored as time and capacity allows and balanced against any access considerations.

6.5 Hallmark: INNOVATION

Definition: be adaptive, resourceful and prepared to take risks
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The organisation encourages innovation and creative thinking. It adapts, invests and takes planned risks, in order to find new and better ways to achieve its purpose.

No one accepts that the status quo is fixed and unchangeable.

Self assessment question

- To what extent do we actively look for new ways of achieving our purpose?

Workshop Feedback

- We don't look for new ways.
- It is hard to get people to go up to the first floor of BH

Ideas

- Look at what is happening in other museums, what is working elsewhere (eg across Surrey)
- More market research needed
- Themes with outside speakers
- Open up events to bring in different people
- Create some new walks
- AI
- Opportunities with social media
- Become more neurodiverse friendly- eg quiet open early sessions
- Consider the best space for the museum
- Connect to themes of creativity, culture, heritage, wellbeing

6.5.1 Recommendations

Becoming open to new ways of delivering the service and connecting with new audiences requires a new mindset for the museum. This could be tested in, for example, considering options for a new name for the museum, developing new interpretation, offering new events and activities, developing new partnerships. There was no shortage of ideas when this was discussed in the workshop.

INN1 The new forward plan should

- **Identify areas where new ways of working could be beneficial**
- **Research and identify best practice and good ideas across the museum sector that can be tested at BMH**
- **Be ready to pilot and evaluate new ways of working**
- **Consider whether external funders can support this work**

6.6 Hallmark: COLLECTIONS

Definition: collect, guard and make accessible your collection.

The organisation understands the potential of its collection. It recognises what constitutes its heritage assets - including stories, knowledge and places, as well as objects.

It seeks to fulfil its purpose through enabling the broadest possible audience to engage fully with all its heritage assets and caring for them in line with best practice.

Self assessment questions

- How strong is the link between our collections and our purpose?
- How well do we use our collections to benefit a broad range of people (and engage with new people?)
- To what extent does our collections care meet best practice standards?

Workshop feedback

- There's a strong link between our collections and our purpose
- Collections relate to the borough of E+E- mostly local history and archaeology
- We could expand the collection too- more contemporary collecting
- The new Collections Development Policy is an opportunity
- The school loan boxes are used to engage young people
- We could work with Nescot on tech history
- Walks and event and re-enactors engage people with the collections
- We change the display cases
- Could also do memory boxes from the collection
- Room D onsite store needs work

This area of work is guided by sector wide standards including the UK Museum Accreditation Scheme (managed by Arts Council England), Spectrum, the UK Collections Management Standard (managed by Collections Trust) and the Museums Association Code of Ethics

6.6.1 Recommendations

The collection is strongly aligned to Epsom and Ewell and has the ability to tell key stories about the history of its places and people. There is potential to develop it further to tell more recent stories of the area and the people who live here today.

Considerable work has been undertaken to research local history and form strong partnerships with local history and archaeology groups.

The most important issue to address is that the museum does not have a suite of robust, accreditation compliant collections management policies, plans and procedures in place to underpin the long term care and access to the collection. This is a risk to the council's ability to be accountable for and care for the collection.

The Accreditation standard requires that the core museum collections management policies are approved by the museum's governing body.

COLL1 The priority is to ensure that Accreditation compliant collections management policies, plans and procedures are in place for the museum collection ahead of its next Accreditation return.

This is an opportunity to review where current practice meets Accreditation requirements and sector standards. This can be reflected in the new Forward Plan for the museum.

COLL2 Review and develop a new Collections Development Policy. This should follow the Arts Council England policy template.

COLL3 Develop a Documentation Policy to underpin accountability for the collection, indicate the standards that will be followed, explain how people can access information about the collection and demonstrate how measures are in place to ensure the long term security of documentation records (physical and digital)

COLL4 Review the museum's current position against the Spectrum primary procedures and write a Documentation Plan to address any gaps.

COLL5 Develop a Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan for the museum, based on a review of current practice. Benchmarks in Collections Care can be used to assess the current position and develop an improvement plan.

COLL6 Accreditation requires that a museum has an Access Policy and Plan in place- this should include access to the collection and collections information.

6.7 Hallmark: VISITOR FOCUS

Definition: understand your visitors and supporters-especially the visitor experience- and invest in its improvement.

The organisation actively seeks to understand its current and potential visitors, customers and supporters, and responds to the needs it identifies, when delivering the organisation's purpose.

It continually measures its quality and its success in delivering a first-class visitor experience to the broadest possible audience and seeks to adapt whenever necessary

Self assessment questions

- How effective are we at delivering a first class visitor experience?
- How well do we understand our current audiences – their needs and motivations?
- How well do we understand our potential audiences and their needs and motivations?

Workshop Feedback

- We could improve promotional materials
- We give everyone 1st class treatment (volunteer perspective)
- The museum is accessible by lift
- We need more and bolder advertising in Bourne Hall and in the park
- We could reflect the history of the hospitals in Horton and the impact on the community now
- We need to sort out some form of visitor survey
- Do surveys [when](#) we have events
- We need to identify audience needs + wants in the museum
- We don't completely understand our current audiences

Having a focus on who is visiting a museum (and who is not visiting) alongside working to ensure the best possible visitor experience is essential for the success of any museum.

A key finding of this review was that BHM does not have any current visitor data or insights on who and how many people are visiting. There is some information about attendance at the museum club and use of school loan boxes but no data on general visitor numbers or qualitative insights on the visitor experience. AIM have a [useful publication](#) for smaller museums on conducting visitor research

The Accreditation standard includes the requirement to evidence how you understand who uses and doesn't use your museum and to use this data to plan improvements to your museum offer.

6.7.1 Recommendations

Visitor research

VF1 Carry out research to understand who is and isn't using the museum at present and understand what people are interested in e.g. what they like about the current museum and what they would like to see in the future (it is understood that focus groups around the borough have already been planned)

VF2 Put systems in place to systematically record and review visitor numbers (including loan box hires, other engagement with schools, museum club attendance and for events)

VF3 Include the findings and actions from this research in the forward plan to identify target audience groups and areas for improvement.

Visitor experience

There is a wealth of information available on best practice in visitor experience that BHM can draw on to plan changes. AIM has this [useful publication](#) that can be drawn upon.

The current Bourne Hall Museum visitor experience benefits from being co-located with the other services in the building but is hindered by not being a strongly identified and signposted presence on the first floor.

The displays themselves are tailored to visitors who are informed and engaged with local history and lack interpretation and interactivity for different audience groups.

VF4 Use the visitor research to pilot and evaluate new approaches to interpretation at low cost

VF5 Gather evidence to inform funding applications to upgrade interpretation in the museum to tell new stories for new audiences.

6.8 Hallmark: AWARENESS & NETWORKS

Definition: take part in varied, active networks and partnership and have good external awareness.

The organisation constantly looks ahead, including outside of itself to the broader heritage and tourism sectors. It is aware of trends and anticipates challenges.

It makes itself well-known, relevant to and visible within its immediate community and has a range of other, wider networks.

Self assessment questions

- How effectively do we identify external developments that might affect us?
- How well do we know our community?
- How well known are we by our community?
- How good are we at making connections with wider networks?

Workshop Feedback

- We have good links to the Surrey History Centre
- Good links to history groups in the Borough
- [REDACTED] has been at the centre of the museum's networks. Will need to think about continuity etc when he retires
- Suspect that the museum is not well known by the community
- I don't think that we are involved in place making
- We could use the Borough Insight publication to raise awareness

6.8.1 Recommendations

There are well established and effective wider cultural and museum networks in Surrey, in particular the Surrey Cultural Partnership (SCP) and Surrey Museums Partnership (SMP). The museum is also an established partner with local history organisations and networks and other cultural bodies in Epsom and Ewell.

There is also a national network, the [English Civic Museums Network](#), which advocates for and supports civic museums across England. The network campaigned successfully for government support for the [Museum Renewal Fund](#) for museums whose financial position is of significant concern. It is a network that it is recommended to track and maintain awareness of.

With local government reorganisation due to take effect from April 2027 there is the potential for the museum to develop as the lead local authority museum service in the east of the county and so partnership and networks that would support this work should be prioritised.

A&N1 Map links to current partners and networks and assess how well these are currently used and could be used further to maximise the museum's impact

A&N2 Consider potential new partnerships that could be developed to deliver priorities identified in the forward plan

A&N3 Ensure that the museum is involved in wider conversations across Surrey about the role and shape of museums in new local authority areas.

6.9 Hallmark: TACKLING INEQUALITY

Definition: the organisation is inclusive and challenges prejudice, discrimination and racism.

The organisation recognises its responsibility to carry out its purpose for the benefit of all, striving to make a positive impact and represent all communities. It understands and takes action to challenge prejudice and inequality and create equality of opportunity for its workforce and its users. It acknowledges that the connections between our nation's history and heritage are an invaluable tool in the fight against discrimination.

Self assessment question

- How effectively does our organisation listen to and act on a range of voices from diverse backgrounds?

Workshop Feedback

- We need to survey our visitors- we have some qualitative but not quantitative feedback
- Be mindful of digital exclusion in all aspects of our work
- We need to be more inclusive of protected groups (eg types of exhibitions)
- Schools are very diverse and regularly use the museum
- We need inclusive events across BH
- Consider accessibility and interpretation
- Need to plan a calendar of work a year ahead
- Look at examples of work done by the National Trust
- Example 'This is Me' (ask Susan)

6.9.1 Recommendations

The workshop discussion established there had not been a proactive approach to date but ideas were shared for future work.

TI 1/ VF Ensure that visitor research includes a range of diverse voices that can inform future work

TI2 The Accreditation requirements 7.1 and 7.2 for a museum Access Policy and Plan, informed by an access assessment, should cover the museum's commitment to providing equitable access to staff, volunteers and visitors and outline how this will be achieved. This should be seen as an opportunity to explore how BHM can actively tackle inequalities in the communities it serves.

6.10 Hallmark: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This Hallmark is still under development however the Accreditation standard also asks that museums consider their work around environmental sustainability in their forward plan. It is also one of Arts Council England's Investment Principles.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Climate Action Plan should guide this work and its impact can already be seen in the Bourne Hall improvement works to install solar panels and more energy efficient double glazed windows.

There are opportunities for the museum to review its own carbon footprint and consider potential for improvements as part of the development of the forward plan.

Museum Development South East offers a training and support programme around carbon literacy <https://mdse.org.uk/carbon-literacy-and-climate-action-programme/> and there is also a [carbon literacy toolkit for museums](#) that can be used independently.

Self assessment question

- What are the opportunities for the museum to reduce its carbon footprint and increase its environmental sustainability?

Workshop Feedback

- LED lighting in the gallery
- Think about use of plastic in archaeological archives
- Events for local people- encourage use of public transport, more park + ride
- Increase energy efficiency of the building
- Be less paper heavy + recycle

6.10.1 Recommendation

ES1 Use the MD South East carbon literacy toolkit to identify steps that BHM can take to reduce its carbon footprint. Embed this work in the Forward Plan.

7.0 Action Plan: summary of recommendations

The first priority for the museum to put policies, plans and procedures in place to ensure compliance with the national standard for museums, Accreditation. This is essential to guarantee good practice in day to day operations and to maintain public and stakeholder trust and accountability to realise its full potential.

The recommendations address these priority areas:

- Meeting the Accreditation standard in order to maintain Bourne Hall Museum's fully Accredited status when next invited to make a return to Arts Council England.
- Aligning the work of the museum to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council strategic priorities and being able to demonstrate how the museum is meeting the needs of the communities it serves.
- Ensuring that the museum is in a robust position to be able to act as a lead service for museums in the east of the county following local government reorganisation.

The timescales are informed by the likely submission date for an Accreditation return in the next 12- 18 months and the date of 1 April 2027 for local government reorganisation in Surrey.

- Short term in 6 to 9 months
- Medium term in 9 to 18 months
- Long term in 18 months to 2 years

Number	Recommendation	Timescale
Short term recommendations- in 6 to 9 months		
P1	Review the museum's statement of purpose ahead of its next Accreditation return.	Short

	This should ensure that the historic legacy of the borough under Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is secured and built on for the future.	
G1	The work of the museum must be clearly aligned to wider strategic priorities through the development of the aims and objectives that direct the museum's new Forward Plan and underpin its statement of purpose.	Short (and ongoing)
G2	The museum service and arts, culture and heritage sit in separate council departments. Where possible, a joined up approach to planning and delivery should be explored to ensure that resources and impact are maximised.	Short and ongoing
VF1	Carry out research to understand who is and isn't using the museum at present and understand what people are interested in.	Short (and ongoing)
TI1 /VF1	Ensure that visitor research includes a range of diverse voices that can inform future work	Short (and ongoing)
VF2	Put systems in place to systematically record and review visitor numbers (including loan box hires, other engagement with schools, museum club attendance and for events)	Short
A&N1	Map links to current partners and networks and assess how well these are currently used and could be used further to maximise the museum's impact	Short
COLL2	Review and develop a new Collections Development Policy. This should follow the Arts Council England policy template.	Short
Medium term recommendations- in 9 to 18 months		
L&C1:	Prepare the museum for the future by developing a new, Accreditation compliant, Forward Plan.	Medium
F1	A resource plan needs to be developed to demonstrate how the new Forward Plan can be delivered. This should scope the resource required (financial, staff, expertise) and identify where this can be met from.	Medium
INN 1	The new forward plan should	Medium and ongoing

	• Identify areas where new ways of working could be beneficial • Research and identify best practice and good ideas across the museum sector that can be tested at BMH • Be ready to pilot and evaluate new ways of working • Consider whether external funders can support this work	
COLL1	The priority is to ensure that Accreditation compliant collections management policies, plans and procedures are in place for the museum collection ahead of its next Accreditation return.	Medium
COLL3	Develop a Documentation Policy to underpin accountability for the collection, indicate the standards that will be followed, explain how people can access information about the collection and demonstrate how measures are in place to ensure the long term security of documentation records (physical and digital)	Medium
COLL4	Review the museum's current position against the Spectrum primary procedures and write a Documentation Plan to address any gaps.	Medium
COLL5	Develop a Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan for the museum, based on a review of current practice.	Medium
COLL6/TI2	Accreditation requires that a museum has an Access Policy and Plan in place- this should include access to the collection and collections information.	Medium
TI2/COLL6	The Accreditation requirements 7.1 and 7.2 for a museum Access Policy and Plan, informed by an access assessment, should cover the museum's commitment to providing equitable access to staff, volunteers and visitors and outline how this will be achieved. This should be seen as an opportunity to explore how BHM can actively tackle inequalities in the communities it serves.	Medium to Long

VF3	Include the findings and actions from this research in the forward plan to identify target audience groups and areas for improvement.	Medium to Long
VF4	Use the visitor research to pilot and evaluate new approaches to interpretation at low cost	Medium to Long
VF5	Gather evidence to inform funding applications to upgrade interpretation in the museum to tell new stories for new audiences.	Medium to Long
Long term recommendations- 18 months- 2 years		
G3	The museum is supported by long serving volunteers across a range of roles. Succession planning and consideration of new volunteer roles and models (eg remote and one off volunteering opportunities) should be explored.	Long
F3	F3 BHM already generates income through its shop and the museum club. Further income generating opportunities should be explored as time and capacity allows and balanced against any access considerations.	Long
ES1	Use the MD South East carbon literacy toolkit to identify steps that BHM can take to reduce its carbon footprint. Commit to this work in the Forward Plan.	Long
Ongoing actions		
F2	Applying for targeted external grant funding will be essential for the museum to maintain its accredited status and develop its visitor offer.	Ongoing
A&N2	Consider potential new partnerships that could be developed to deliver priorities identified in the forward plan	Ongoing
A&N3	Ensure that the museum is involved in wider conversations across Surrey about the role and shape of museums in new local authority areas.	Ongoing

8.0 APPENDIX 1

Summary of future options

This report has been written with the assumption that the ownership and responsibility for the museum assets (specifically its collection) and operation will pass to the successor authority to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council from 1st April 2027.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council priority 7 will look at future options for the museum service and so short appraisals of future options in terms of governance are included here. This type of options appraisal demands detailed and expert guidance and these additional needs are highlighted here. The Local Government Association has [specific guidance](#) on consideration of different operating models for museums which should be consulted. Advice should also be sought from Arts Council England (the national development body for museums) through Museum Development South East.

It must be understood that **any** option for a successful future for the museum will be dependent on the focus and investment outlined in the recommendations of this report so that it can effectively build on the legacy of the work done by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and serve, inspire and delight both local residents and visitors.

This does not constitute legal advice which should be sought to correctly determine the implications of future options.

Transfer to the successor authority

The museum and its collection have a valuable future role to play in ensuring that the history and stories of Epsom and Ewell (and its museum collection of around 15,000 objects) are preserved and shared as a legacy of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, not least in its achievement in developing the museum itself.

There is ongoing and recent precedent for this type of transfer being undertaken successfully, for example [The Dock Museum in Barrow in Furness](#) moved from district council operation under Barrow Borough Council (who established it in 1994) to Westmorland and Furness Council, the new unitary authority, on 1st April 2023. The [Grosvenor Museum in Chester](#) moved from Chester City Council to Cheshire West and Chester Council in 2009.

To realise its full potential Bourne Hall Museum will need the focus and investment outlined in the recommendations in this report in order to continue to comply with national standards and to proactively serve its communities and act as a focus for visitors to the area.

There is an opportunity in the successor authority to act as a lead museum for the area, offering support and guidance to volunteer run museums across the east of the county.

There may be public concerns about the future of local services under a new authority but good communications from the new authority to reassure residents about continuity of the

service and the long term security of museum collections can help maintain public trust. The collection and stories relating to Epsom and Ewell will remain as a core foundation of the museum and its work with visitors.

Transfer to a new body

It is possible that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council could consider whether the museum and its users would be better served by governance under a different authority (eg a parish or town council) or as an independent, charitable museum with an associated governance structure.

This would need detailed legal examination, advice and public consultation. The museum collection is a significant, long term public asset and any change in ownership outside the successor authority to EEBC would need existing legislation to be checked for any restrictive covenants and new legal agreements to be drafted and agreed for future arrangements. The [Museums Association Code of Ethics](#) would need to be followed to ensure public benefit is maintained and the good stewardship of the collection is assured.

Arts Council England would need to be informed to ensure continued compliance with the Accreditation Standard. This type of change of governance would require a new application to the scheme.

The long term financial sustainability of the museum would also need careful planning. Its current overheads are low as it is co-located in Bourne Hall and employs only 1.5 FTE. If the museum was to move to new premises or to be a tenant of a new body there would be both opportunity costs and new property costs to meet. There could be the potential for additional staffing costs as the needs of the museum are also served by the wider Bourne hall staff team. The potential for joined up working with, for example, arts and culture and health and wellbeing would be reduced if responsibility for these was in separate bodies.

The ongoing needs of the collection and the museum, as outlined in this report, would still remain—not least the need for investment to develop and grow existing and new audiences.

The current museum is the repository for archaeological archives for Epsom and Ewell; this would need to be reviewed and agreed with the new local authority structure and resources allocated for their long term care and access.

A change of this magnitude would require not only extensive planning work to ensure that legal and ethical duties are met but the significant change work would also risk diverting resources away from core museum service development and delivery

Museum closure

Future options could also consider museum closure. A brief summary of the steps that would need to be taken and the impact is below.

Steps to close the museum

- The Museums Association has a [guidance document](#) on the legal and ethical considerations for museum facing closure, this should be followed.
- Public consultation on the impact of closure is a legal duty under the Equality Act (2010)
- Stakeholder and partner consultation is essential to ensure that public benefit is maintained wherever possible.
- A plan for closure should consider
 - museum visitors and local communities
 - staff and volunteers
 - collections
 - buildings
 - external funding relationships and
 - partnerships
 - other physical and digital assets.
- The future of the museum collection will be a key concern for the public and stakeholders. The governing body could consider continuing to own and manage the collection (with associated costs and responsibilities) or disposal in line with the [Museums Association's Off the Shelf toolkit](#) for ethical transfer, reuse and disposal of collections.

Possible impacts to consider

- Loss of public trust (and reputation) in the authority's ability to care for and promote the history and heritage of Epsom and Ewell.
- Loss of trust with key stakeholder (especially volunteer) groups
- Limited financial savings- the costs of closure would be considerable. If the collection is not disposed of there will be ongoing storage and management costs. If it was disposed of this would require prolonged staff time (and expertise) to be completed legally and ethically.
- If the collection is maintained as a resource with no fixed public offer there would still be ongoing costs to manage and care for it appropriately and ethically. As the museum currently employs 1.5 FTE there is limited room to reduce this cost.
- A collection without a physical museum offer is not eligible for the Accreditation Scheme which would, in turn, restrict the funding opportunities available to it.