

CABINET

16 September 2009

GRANT FOR WINCHESTER EXCAVATIONS COMMITTEE

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB177 - Winchester Excavations Committee - Funding - 10 July 2001

CAB649 - Winchester Excavations Committee – Funding, 21 May 2003

CAB981 Winchester Excavations Committee – Funding, 15 December 2004

CAB1223 – Winchester Excavations Committee – Funding, 22 March 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report brings Members up to date on the work of the Winchester Excavations Committee in relation to the programme for the publication of *The Winchester Studies*. It advises of the current funding situation of the Committee, and considers a request for a grant of £15,000 over two financial years to cover the project's office accommodation costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That in accordance with Financial Procedure Rule 7.3, Cabinet approves a supplementary revenue estimate, for the provision of a grant funded from unallocated Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) reserves of £15,000, spread over the two financial years (2009/10 and 2010/11), to support the continued progress of the Winchester Excavations Committee, subject to match funding being secured by the Committee from other sources.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The archaeological investigations carried out in Winchester during the 1960s under the supervision of Professor Martin Biddle established the city as one of the most interesting and well-documented cultural sites in the world.
- 1.2 Arising from the investigations was a programme of publications known as *The Winchester Studies*. Work is overseen by the Winchester Excavations Committee, which includes leading Members from both across the Council and other senior figures from the City.
- 1.3 Although it has taken longer than anticipated for the publications to emerge, the quality, detail and international acclaim of the *Studies* series have been acknowledged by both the City and County Council over the last decade through a series of grants.
- 1.4 This report provides a brief overview of progress, and seeks a further grant of £15,000 spread over two financial years to ensure that work on the *Studies* can continue to progress.

2 Background

- 2.1 Much of the background to the *Winchester Studies* is included in previous Cabinet reports, and Members are referred in particular to CAB1223 which was approved in March 2006.
- 2.2 In summary, however, the *Studies* are the findings from 24 archaeological projects initiated by the City Council and including the Old and New Minsters, the palace of the medieval bishops at Wolvesey and the north bailey of the castle at Castle Yard. In fact, between 1962 and 1971 the Winchester Excavations Committee carried out the largest programme of archaeological excavations and historical research ever undertaken in a British city. The Council's own archaeology unit worked on the excavations, under the direction of Martin Biddle.
- 2.3 Following the excavations, there was an obvious need to carry out research and identification work, conserve the finds, relate the archaeology to written archives and publish the full details as the only comprehensive research of a

British City from Roman times through to the nineteenth century. The City Council, with the assistance of Hampshire County Council and funding from Government sources and charitable trusts, set up an independent research unit to carry out this task. Work was and continues to be supported by staff from the Council's museums service, and Martin Biddle's library is hosted at the collections store at F2 as an integral part of the museums collections.

- 2.4 By 2000, the output of the unit covered more than 4,000 pages and was internationally regarded as the definitive work of its type. The length of time taken to progress the publication programme reflects in part the difficulty of obtaining external funding, but work has continued in spite of this uncertainty thanks to the voluntary contributions of many leading academics and Martin Biddle himself. The City Council suspended its own financial support until in the late 1980s until the publications programme came back on track.
- 2.5 However, the project was given new impetus in the late 1990s with a new committee, a successful fundraising campaign and commencement of a new phase of publication. Since 2001, therefore, the local authorities have approved grants as part of a funding package designed to support the current phase of the *Studies* programme.

3 The Status of the Project

- 3.1 As mentioned in previous reports, the work of the Winchester Excavations Committee has been regarded as so important that it was named in a feature in *The Times* of 1 January 2000 as one of the top ten archaeological projects of the 20th century that are of world importance.
- 3.2 Martin Biddle's work, particularly that at Winchester, was also recognised by the provision of a specialist fellowship at Oxford University and the creation of a Chair of Medieval Archaeology, which he held until his retirement in 2002.

4 Recent Progress

- 4.1 CAB1223 (March 2006) details the publication of publications and developments since local authority funding was reinstated in 2001. These included
 - publication of Volume 4.iii (240 pages) on *Property and Piety in Medieval Winchester* in 2002.
 - publication of Volume 4.ii (837 pages) on *The Cult of St Swithun* in 2003.
 - publication of the first map from Volume 12 the *Winchester Historical Town Atlas* in 2006 (a copy of which was presented to the Mayor by Professor Biddle).
 - grant aid for work on Volume 4.i on the *Anglo Saxon Minsters*, to be delivered to Oxford University Press in August 2006.

- planned publication of Volume 8 on *The Winchester Mint* and of Volume 6i on *Winchester Castle* in 2007.
- 4.2 In 2006, Members approved the conversion of a £10,000 loan to the Excavations Committee into a grant to reflect the ongoing efforts taken to secure match funding from other sources, as well as the difficulty in obtaining grants for overheads such as office rent and running costs.
- 4.3 The plan has always been to publish, through Oxford University Press, eleven volumes in seventeen parts. At the time of this report, six volumes in eight parts have so far been published.
- 4.4 At the most recent meeting of the Committee, a progress report indicated that:
- the first 700 pages of Volume 4.i (the Minsters) would now be going for typesetting this autumn, following delays arising from the ill health of Dr Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle. Publication anticipated during 2010.
 - Volume 8 (the Mint) would be completed in September following receipt of one final written contribution, after which it would be prepared to go to press. Publication anticipated 2010/11.
 - good progress was being made on assembling Volume 9.i on *The People of Early Medieval Winchester*. Publication anticipated 2011.

5 Funding for the Excavations Committee

- 5.1 As has been indicated earlier in this report, the work of the Excavations Committee over the years has been affected by the funds available. Most of the major contributors give their time and input free of charge, as has Martin Biddle in relation to both his own written contributions and the detailed editing of all volumes. However, there are costs for manuscript typing (including specialist script work), architectural and archaeological drawing, professional photography, travel, some research and writing, and, most expensively, the Oxford Research office where most of the drawing, wider research and contact meetings take place, and where all the work in progress and bulk of the archives are housed.
- 5.2 The accommodation cost is approximately £15,000 per annum. Although in due course most of the material and records held in the Oxford office will be returned to Winchester – and indeed, work is routinely carried out in Winchester by researchers working on the *Studies* – Professor and Dr Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle are both based in Oxford and the completion of the work will be expedited by easy access to local office and research facilities.
- 5.2 In addition to his professional input to the series, Professor Biddle has also made over to the Committee his royalty rights in the separately published, but jointly 'badged' as part of Winchester Studies, book on King Arthur's Round Table that was published in late 2000.

- 5.3 Over £260,000 has been raised between 1997 and 2009 by the Excavations Committee, including grants totalling £94,600 from the combined City and County Councils; £73,500 from trusts and other funds; over £48,000 in individual donations, and nearly £27,000 from organisations such as the Oxford University Press, the British Academy and Try Homes. All of the funding raised so far has been spent on the project and further funding is now being actively sought.
- 5.4 At a meeting with leading Members in January 2008, representatives of the Excavations Committee requested consideration of a three year commitment of £7,500 per annum from 2008/09 to support office overheads. Given the widespread support for the work of the Excavations Committee, it was suggested that funding might be committed if Professor Biddle and his colleagues could successfully secure match funding from other sources. (The County Council has opted not to make any more grants to the Committee at the present time, but may reconsider its position once the next two volumes have been published.)
- 5.5 In 2008/09, match funding was secured from Lord Ashburton and The Linbury Trust and a grant of £7,500 was given to the Excavations Committee from a total £50,000 allocation of Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) funds already ring-fenced for cultural projects.
- 5.6 The Committee has now requested confirmation of grants for 2009/10 and 2010/11 on the basis that it has already made successful approaches to The Linbury Trust and Lord Ashburton, leading to commitments totalling £7,500 in match funding for 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 5.7 It is proposed that in order to maintain progress on the programme of publication, the City Council confirms a grant of £7,500 per annum in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to the Excavations Committee, subject to match funding being secured by the Committee from other sources. This will constitute a supplementary revenue estimate under Financial Procedure Rule 7.3.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The work of the Winchester Excavations Committee directly supports a key outcome in the Sustainable Community Strategy relating to economic prosperity, in particular:
“Winchester exploits its reputation as a cultural stronghold [using this as a means to stimulate a modern and creative approach to business, by ... marketing Winchester as a world-class tourism destination..].”
- 6.2 The Council has powers under S14(b) to provide grant aid to others providing services which assist the Council in undertaking its museum functions.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 Grants for the Excavations Committee have previously taken the form of supplementary estimates, apart from in 2008/09 when a grant was made from the LABGI reserve allocated to cultural projects.
- 7.2 The proposed grants for 2009/10 and 2010/11 (which total £15,000) cannot be accommodated within existing revenue budgets, and it is therefore proposed that they be drawn from currently unallocated LABGI reserves.
- 7.3 Other than the grant expenditure, there is no additional impact on existing revenue budgets, and – given the existing presence of senior officers on the Excavations Committee there would be no increase in staff time required to administer the grant.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 There are few risks associated with this funding. The key risk is to the reputation of the Council should any misuse of public monies occur, and these are managed through the standard corporate practice of issuing a letter of agreement with tailored conditions to be met, along with regular monitoring meetings between officers of both organisations to assess progress in meeting these conditions.
- 8.2 Another potential risk to the reputation of the Council is of being seen to be favouring this – highly academic and protracted – project over other locally identified community needs at a time when financial resources are scarce. However, given the Council's levels of commitment to both the archaeological works and publications programme over many years, there is a strong case for finishing what has been started to ensure a return on the investment. This return will take the form of international kudos for the City in academic circles and growing recognition of Winchester as a major cultural centre. There is also good potential – which the Council's museums service has already been exploiting – to take the themes and the information from the *Studies* and use them as a basis for more accessible talks, tours, leaflets and displays.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Papers held in the Excavations Committee files in the Chief Executive's, Head of Finance's and Corporate Director (Operations) Departments.

See also <http://www.winchesterstudies.org.uk/>

APPENDICES:

None