

Questionnaire: The future of Surrey Archaeological Society

Following receipt of the S25 Notice to terminate the Society's long standing licence to occupy Castle Arch from 29 January 2016, Council delegated to the Management Committee responsibility to continue negotiations with Guildford Borough Council and to develop both a short term plan to address the immediate impact of the Notice and a longer term plan for the general future direction of the Society.

The short term plan is largely in place. Regarding the longer term plan, Council is keen to hear the wider membership's views on how they perceive the future of the Society bearing in mind not just the current issues over Castle Arch, but a slowly declining and ageing membership and an increasing difficulty finding volunteers to fill an increasing number of vacancies within the Society.

To assist in this process a questionnaire is enclosed designed to address some of these issues but Council would welcome other comments and especially urges members to attend the special meeting that will follow the Spring Symposium on 27 February 2016 at the Ashted Peace Memorial Hall. The Symposium will finish early so that from 15.10 there will be free entry to the special meeting starting at 15.30.

When completing the questionnaire please simply mark which box matches the degree of importance you attach to each question and return it electronically or in hard copy to Castle Arch. There is a final larger box for members to add any further comment which will contribute to the discussions at Council and Management meetings. Please also bear in mind with all that is going on that the Society may not be able to continue running the current range of activities and may face difficult questions as to where and how to cut back.

1 What degree of importance do you attach to the office and library continuing long term as a single focal point.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not important				Very important

Bear in mind that if this remained a single unit the rent for this amount of space could be expensive if it were to be located within relatively easy access to Guildford. But also bear in mind that the Assistant Librarian and the Office Administrator and office volunteers provide a back up service in each other's absence. The personal security issues arising from lone working might be greater if the office and library are in separate locations.

2 Considering your response to 1 above should the office and library remain in Guildford?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not important				Very important

Bear in mind Guildford is the county town. Rents are likely to be significant in and around the town and a major item of expense to the Society. Also bear in mind ease of access, transport etc. for members, staff and volunteers.

3 Should the Society continue to provide a library facility in the current format and scale or disband it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue in current format				Disband it

Bear in mind the current costs of running the library amount to about 20% of total charitable expenses and consume about 15% of the Society's regular income. The figures reflect the fact that the Society is not paying rent for the space required by the library. These figures would increase considerably if the Society had to pay an open market rent for the space required by the library. Based on library usage statistics the library is underused. Under the Memorandum and Articles of Association the Society is empowered but not required to maintain a library. If the library is disbanded it is unlikely that the material will remain available locally other than a proportion of the Research Collection.

4 Should the Society continue to publish and issue to members hard copies of the Bulletin, the Collections and Surrey History or should future access be via the Society's website as is common with other societies?

Continue
with hard
copies

Move to
internet
access

Bear in mind publication costs represent 24% of total charitable costs and account for 18% of total ongoing income. It is also becoming increasingly costly to deliver hard copies to members. Not all members will have access to the internet.

5 What importance do you attach to having the Society's artefacts displayed?

Not
important

Very
important

Bear in mind that for this to be effective any display would probably be in circumstances where the Society is linked physically with a museum rather than the Society functioning separately as an office and library.

6 Do you attach any importance to whether we should rent a property or buy/lease a property?

Rent

No
view

Buy/Lease

Bear in mind that annual costs for rent depending on location could be expensive but it would be possible to tweak the investment portfolio to mitigate some of the effect. Selling a significant or substantial portion of the investment portfolio would significantly reduce our annual investment income.

7 Do you think more of the Society's income should be devoted to training and education?

No

Yes

Bear in mind that there is a certain amount of on site training at excavations already. The various specialist interest groups run regular meetings each year and the Society runs a number of annual conferences. In addition the Society has been running a medieval pottery study group.

8 Do you think the Society should consider as a desirable long term objective the establishment of some form of LAARC style centre combining the HQ with the library and additional space for displays?

No

Yes

Bear in mind this could only be a long term aim. It is not possible to quantify the cost to the Society and would require significant income from grants coupled with fund raising events and by implication significant input in time and effort from members.

9 Should you wish to, please use the space below to express any views you may have on where you think the Society should be heading; what you think the priorities should be or any other issue that is of particular concern to you but has not been addressed in this questionnaire. For example do you think our public image is aligned to the Society's objects? Should the Society run social activities? With Woking, Ewell and Ashted finished do you think the Society should continue to sponsor high profile excavations? What would your idea be of what an effective county archaeological society should look like in the 21st century?