
JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on 19 January 2005 at 10.30am.

PRESENT:

Councillors D Budd (MBC), A Cunningham (SBC), C Hill (HBC) and D Fitzpatrick (R&CBC).

****PRESENT AS OBSERVER:**

J Nicholson (Friends of Teesside Archives).

OFFICIALS:

D Tyrell (Teesside Archive Service), J Richardson (R&CBC), K Tranter (HBC), L Featherstone (SBC); C Mellor, T White and J Willis (MBC).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by Members at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 October 2004 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

JOINT ARCHIVES BUDGET 2005/2006 REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LIBRARIES

The Head of Libraries submitted a report to advise Members on the proposed budget for Teesside Archives in 2005/06 and to seek approval to progress the submission. Further approval was sought in respect of the fees and charges for Teesside Archives in 2005/06.

Members were aware from previous Committee reports that the Action Plan resulting from the Inspections of 2002 required growth in the revenue budget. At the Joint Archives Committee held on 4 August 2004, it was agreed that each Authority would give consideration to the implementation of the identified financial implications for staffing, a total of £39,941, within each Authority's budget for 2005/06. At the Joint Archives Committee held 27 October 2004 it was agreed that consideration be given by each individual authority to making provision in the 2005/06 capital budget setting process in relation to addressing the Archives Service storage issues, pending resolution of the precise amounts required.

To ease progression with the budget setting process, a standstill budget plus inflation, of 2% was proposed which was the minimum required budget to assure continuation of service but did not allow for the full implementation of the Action Plan in line with the requirements to retain the appointment of a place of deposit as delegated by the National Archives.

The financial implications for each authority in respect of the Archives Service for 2005/06 were detailed at paragraph 6 of the report, as follows:-

- Hartlepool – Budget £26,204 – Increase of £779.
- Middlesbrough – Budget £40,523 – Increase of £1,023
- Redcar & Cleveland – Budget £37,981 – Increase of £1,206
- Stockton on Tees – Budget 51,270 – Increase of £1,630

Members were referred to paragraph 7 of the report which listed the proposed fees and charges for the service and it was noted that there had been no increases made for over three years. There was no increase in the charge for black and white photocopying, 15p per A4 copy and 25p

per A3 copy. The introduction of the new colour copying service from Spring 2005 would be charged at 50p per A4 copy and 75p per A3 copy.

It was proposed that charges for research, conservation and storage be rationalised for ease of implementation as follows:-

- Research - £5 per 15 minutes (including 5 copies and postage).
- Conservation Work - £12 per 30 minutes.
- Storage - £15 per metre.

The Assistant Chief Executive for Economic Regeneration was also in attendance at the meeting and stressed the importance of the proposals contained within the report and previous reports to the Committee which outlined recommendations for budget growth which would be vital to the Service's continued accreditation by the National Archives.

Discussion ensued with regard to the proposed increases for the 2005/06 Archives Service budget, along with concerns regarding budgetary pressures on each of the respective authorities. The following key issues were highlighted:-

- Reference was made to ensuring that an approach to more 'joined up' working between the four authorities be explored in respect of the Archives Service and associated savings identified.
- Clarification was provided with regard to the current position in respect of discussions, at an appropriate senior management level, of the issues raised with regard to the budget implications for each Authority in order to progress the improvements identified in the 2002 Inspection Reports to enable the Teesside Archives to retain the appointment of a place of deposit as Delegated by the National Archives.
- The representative of the Friends of Teesside Archives highlighted the amount of work contributed to the Service by the Friends and urged Members to make their respective authorities aware of the importance of identifying additional funding for the Teesside Archives in order for the Service to continue in future years.
- In response to a suggestion, it was confirmed that the possibility of increasing fees and charges on an annual basis in line with inflation would be an option for future consideration by the Archives Service.
- In response to a query, Members were advised that the current Archives Service was operating with the minimum levels of staffing allowed by BS 5454 requirements.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the proposed budget for 2005/06 be approved for progression through each individual authority.**
- 2. That the proposed fees and charges in respect of the Archives Service for 2005/06 be approved for progression through each individual authority.**
- 3. That the four authorities work together to identify possible savings resulting from 'joined up' working between the four authorities in respect of the Archives Service.**

REASONS

The recommendations were supported by the following reasons:-

- 1. To allow the Service to maintain the current level of operation.**
- 2. Adoption of the Action Plan was in line with the requirements to retain the appointment of a place of deposit as delegated by the National Archives.**

ACTION PLAN MANAGEMENT

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LIBRARIES

The Head of Libraries submitted a report to update Members on progress of implementing the management issues raised as part of the National Archive Inspection and the NEMLAC external consultant's report and to seek approval for progressing the actions outlined in the report.

Members requested, at the meeting held on 6 May 2004, that projected costs in relation to the three key areas identified in the inspection reports be identified and submitted for consideration. The key issues identified for address were staffing, storage and management. The submitted report related purely to management, covering performance, monitoring and planning.

The report detailed the actions which had been completed with no financial implications, as follows:-

- Adoption of the Five Year Action Plan in August 2004.
- Necessary environmental controls and monitoring now in place.
- Production of three Policy Documents, in line with national guidelines: Preservation, Conservation, Acquisition and Disposal.
- Establishment of an Officer Group (operations).

Members were advised of further actions for completion which required approval including the implementation of five suggested Performance Indicators appropriate to the Service in support of shared priorities and the revision of fees and charges for the Service, as presented in the previous report.

Those actions currently in progress were listed in the report, together with detailed updates, as follows:-

- IT development Plan.
- Collections Management.
- Rationalisation of Service.

A key action was highlighted as collections management and it was noted that the current catalogue was held on cards and in bound volume, making it difficult to use and inaccessible remotely. Investigations had been made into the possibility of implementing the CALM software package as a tool for collections management and management data. The system would run alongside that currently used by Middlesbrough Libraries which would result in both start up and maintenance savings.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 7 of the report which detailed indicative costs relating to the installation and maintenance of CALM software, including training, licenses and equipment, based on a maximum use scenario for the four Authorities. Indicative costs for each Authority, in total, equated to:-

- Hartlepool - £5,525 plus £680 annual maintenance.
- Middlesbrough - £8,450 plus £1,040 annual maintenance.
- Redcar & Cleveland - £7,800 plus £960 annual maintenance.
- Stockton on Tees - £10,725 plus £1,320 annual maintenance.

The Committee was advised that negotiations to obtain external funding for the system were currently ongoing with a charitable organisation. Success would remove capital budget implications, however, revenue implications would remain for future years.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the potential financial implications be noted and progressed for consideration within each Authority for implementation in 2005/06.**

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2. That progression of the actions outlined in the report be approved.
 3. That further research into identifying external funding sources be approved.

REASON

The recommendations were supported by the following reason:-

1. The adoption of the Action Plan was in line with the requirements to retain the appointment of a place of deposit as delegated by the National Archives.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LIBRARIES

The Head of Libraries submitted a report to update members on the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and potential impact on the Archives Service.

The access provisions of the FOI Act came into force on 1 January 2005 and replaced the access provision for UK public records set out in the Public Records Act 1958 – 1967, governing access to information held by most public sector bodies.

The report detailed those records which would be covered by the FOI and explained that the National Archives was developing guidance for places of deposit on how Freedom of Information Act requests for information in deposited public places should be handled.

All records covered by the Act were available for inspection at the Archives Service. Catalogues and card indexes for reference purposes could not be removed, however, the implementation of CALM software would allow remote access to the catalogue via the internet.

Members were advised that it was unknown, as yet, to what extent the FOI would impact on Archives' staff workload, however, they would be made aware should the FOI lead to significant increases in workload and/or have an adverse impact on income from research fees. Research fees accounted for approximately 20% of the Archives Service income and current guidance showed that this charge should stand.

It was acknowledged that the Teesside Archives would continue to handle all enquiries on behalf of the four Authorities and the Senior Archivist advised that there had not been a significant increase in requests for information to date since the FOI had come into force.

RECOMMENDED

1. That the actions undertaken and possible impact following implementation be noted.
2. That maintenance of current practice in respect of charges, pending further guidance, be approved.

REASONS

The recommendations were supported by the following reasons:-

1. Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 was a statutory requirement.
2. A decrease in income would lead to a reduction in service quality.

SURVEY OF VISITORS TO BRITISH ARCHIVES

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LIBRARIES

The Head of Libraries submitted a report to inform Members of the findings of the 2004 visitor survey conducted at the Teesside Archives.

The Committee was advised that the user survey was a national survey managed by the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) on behalf of the National Council on Archives Public Services Quality Group (PSQG). The analysis of results was performed by the IPF and provided a comparison against regional and national results.

A copy of the survey results was appended to the report. It was recognised that the results provided indicative results in terms of Archives usage, however, the weighting and national comparison ensured the validity for use in service planning.

It was noted that Teesside Archives had scored highly on the satisfaction rating of visitors on customer care, well above the national and regional ratings. 100% found the service overall to be very good or good; 92% found the staff helpful and friendly and 69% stated document delivery to be very good.

Ratings for visitor (33%) and ICT (16%) facilities were rated as those most requiring improvement. 89% of visitors used the service for the purpose of interest in family history and 11% were using the information gained for formal educational purposes.

Key details in terms of visitor demographics was included in the report with 71% of service users being aged 55 and over and 38% of visitors using Teesside Archives for more than five years.

The survey had identified similar key issues as those identified in the inspection reports, in summary the service offered was highly regarded but there was a need to improve visitor facilities and to expand the range of service users.

In response to a query, Members were advised that there had been a total of approximately 200 visitors to the Teesside Archives during the week of the survey in 2004.

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That the results of the survey be noted and used in future planning.**

REASON

The recommendation was supported by the following reason:-

- 1. The survey was nationally recognised and externally validated.**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

assistance at open days/events

Jim Nicholson, Friends of Teesside Archives, advised that the Friends would be available upon request from any of the four authorities to help provide information at open days and events with regard to local history issues.

NOTED

Development of software for the Blind/Partially Sighted

The Committee was informed that the Friends of Teesside Archives were attempting to improve facilities at the Archives for the blind and partially sighted. A new software package for use with the PC had been obtained which read out information to the individual to enable research work to be carried out. The Friends' next project was to acquire a PC and possibly a scanner to help make research work for the blind and partially sighted more user-friendly. The Friends of Teesside Archives stated that they would be extremely grateful for the donation of a surplus PC from any of the local authorities.

On behalf of the Joint Archives Committee, the Chair thanked the Friends of Teesside Archives for the work that it carried out and felt its members should be congratulated on their achievements and wished them luck with their latest project to help blind and partially sighted service users.

NOTED

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was scheduled for 13th April 2005 at 10.30am.