

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

BUDGET AND RELATED ISSUES

23 April 2009

KEVIN PARKES, INTERIM DIRECTOR - REGENERATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To:
 - a. update the Committee on budgetary issues
 - b. update the Committee on the outcome of a recent inspection of the Archives
 - c. outline the scope of a service review

BACKGROUND

2. Members will be aware that some anomalies have emerged concerning the Archives service budget. The joint agreement relating to the Archive service sets out a process for setting the annual revenue budget, a formula for apportioning the budget across the four councils, and a mechanism for adjustment at outturn. The formula for apportionment is based on population data for the previous year, from the Registrar General.
3. Analysis of the relevant records has identified the following issues:
 - a. for a number of recent years, the formula used to split the budget has deviated slightly from that which should have been used;
 - b. the budgetary impact of the outcome of job evaluation has not been fully built in and had not been formally notified;
 - c. increases in revenue costs arising from the need to increase staffing following the previous National Archive inspection have not been fully factored in.
4. Whilst these are the main issues, there are one or two other minor anomalies. A lot of work has been done on getting to the bottom of the issues, but this work has not quite been completed. It is expected that this exercise will be completed very shortly and a further more detailed report made to the next meeting of the Joint

Archives Committee. It is important to emphasise that the anomalies are not great in overall financial terms, but clearly a resolution needs to be found.

5. Instead, this information is given to members partly as an update, and partly by way of background to the more pressing matter of settling the current year's budget. It had not been possible to bring forward proposals for the current year's budget because of the need to understand and resolve the anomalies referred to above. Meetings of the four borough librarians have agreed that, in view of the uncertainties created by the situation outlined, a short but comprehensive review of the Archive service should be undertaken, to ensure that it is fit for purpose, that it meets customer needs, and that it is delivering value for money. A set of terms of reference for the review have been prepared; these are attached at Appendix One and the Committee is asked to approve them. All four councils have agreed to second staff to work part time to progress the review, and a steering group representing the four borough librarians has been established.
6. A proposed budget for 2009/10 will be presented to the Archives Committee following the completion of the review at either the next meeting or a special meeting.

BUDGET SETTING PROTOCOL

7. One of the reasons for the anomalies referred to above is that the 1998 joint agreement is silent on the question of how to resolve any differences of view between the councils that may emerge at various stages of the budget setting process. A draft protocol to plug this gap will be drawn up and presented at a future meeting.

ARCHIVE INSPECTION

8. In October 2008, the National Archives carried out an inspection of the Teesside Archive. A letter has recently been received from the National Archives (attached at Appendix Two) setting out the results of the inspection. Some of the key points from the letter are as follows:
 - a. a view that the present building falls significantly short of the standard of accommodation required;
 - b. a view that it would not be possible to upgrade it to meet required standards at reasonable cost and that therefore options for relocating the service should be considered;
 - c. the need for extra vigilance in relation to fire hazard and temperature and humidity control;
 - d. the need for improved on-line access;
 - e. a view that the staffing levels are too low and should be reviewed;
 - f. the need for a Collecting Development Policy.
9. It is not proposed to comment on these findings in this report, simply to draw them to members' attention. It will be essential that the service review outlined above addresses the immediate/short term points made in the National Archives' letter. However the inspection conclusions on the building creates a number of fundamental long term issues that will need to be resolved separately. A fuller

report setting out building issues and options will come to a future meeting of the Archives Committee.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSEMENT

10. There are 2 options available:

Option 1 – do nothing. Resulting in being unable to set the budget nor resolve issues. High risk of losing status of Place of Deposit from The National Archives.

Option 2 (preferred option) – Move forward with service review. Ensuring that a full service review can take place and finalise outstanding budgetary issues.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. These will be brought to the Committee as part of a future financial report subsequent to the service review.

Ward Implications

12. There are no ward implications arising from this report

Legal Implications

13. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. That members:

- a. note the budgetary issues;
- b. Accept the service review terms of reference;
- c. Note the recent results of the inspection.

REASONS

15. The recommendations are supported in order to allow progression of the budgetary issues and progression of the Archives Service.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix One – Service review terms of reference

Appendix Two – The National Archives Inspection letter

AUTHOR: Tim White/Julie Tweedy

TEL NO: (01642) 729412

Address:

Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>