

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on 23 July 2009.

PRESENT:

Councillor S Clarke (Redcar & Cleveland Council), Councillor P Thompson (Substitute for Middlesbrough Council), Councillor V Tumilty (Hartlepool Council), Councillor Mrs M Womphrey (Stockton Council).

OFFICIALS:

J Baker, J Brittain, S Cartlidge, S Harker, G Jarritt, C Lunn, E Tennant, J Tweedy and I Wilson.

PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:

J Nicholson (Friends of Teesside Archives Group).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor Budd (Middlesbrough Council).

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point of the meeting.

****MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Archives Committee held on 23 April 2009 were taken as read and approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Apologies for Absence – Councillor S Clarke – to be added.

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the appointment of a Chair for the Municipal Year 2009/2010. In accordance with the agreed protocol for the appointment of a Chair on a rota basis the chairmanship transferred to the Member representative from Redcar & Cleveland Council.

Councillor S Clarke in the Chair

The Committee thanked Councillor Mrs M Womphrey for the contributions made as Chair during the Municipal year 2008/09.

PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR APRIL – JUNE 2009

The Senior Librarian for Middlesbrough Council presented a report the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with a performance update for April – June 2009.

The last inspection of Teesside Archives by the National Archives (TNA) was held in 2008. In 2008 this inspection regime was supplemented by an annual self-assessment, scored by National Archives. As mentioned at the last Joint Archives Committee meeting the service had been scored as a three-star service (out of four).

There were currently no statutory indicators or standards relating to archives services. A C.I.P.F.A return was required on an annual basis. The range of work undertaken by Teesside Archives was varied, and included conservation and outreach work. This report provided a summary of this work.

The number of visitors to Teesside Archives during the period April – June 2009 was 1404. Appendix 1 of the report showed a statistical report of Performance for this period. It was

reported that 12.3% of visitors from outside the area included searchers from Canada, Australia and the Orkneys.

There had been a total of 43 outreach events/talks/visits/displays over this period. A World War 2 event was attended at Hartlepool Central Library and a regional dissemination day for Initial Teacher Training Providers to promote the use of Archives as a valuable teaching resource was also attended. Dr Ashok Kumar MP visited the Archives to find out about the British Steel Archives Project and Teesside Archives in General. The learning and Access staff were currently working with two Primary Schools and a Church investigating the history of their local community. All the work would be put into a book and showcased at community events. An opportunity also arose to take part in a 2-hour slot on James Cook University Hospital radio. Recent displays had included one on family history for a Redcar & Cleveland Adult Education Group as well as one for Staithes Local History Group.

Conservation had been carried out on a variety of archives in the last three months in order to make them available to the public for research. In total 217 items were repaired, cleaned and repackaged. Work included full conservation of two panoramic photographs of St. Mary's College, Middlesbrough and repairing several Stockton Rate books.

Some 1850 records were treated in preservation projects. This involved cleaning, repackaging, labeling and reboxing into acid free enclosures. The condition of these collections was noted so that any future conservation required could be prioritised. They included records from the Co-op, which covered all four Boroughs.

Other duties and events had included: Carrying out paid conservation work for various institutions and members of the public; Seven talks/demonstrations to various groups; Up to 10-hours a month were taken environmentally monitoring and checking the condition of the whole archive building; Collecting records for deposit at the Archives and helping to move and rebox collections.

The basic Archives service was provided free at the point of delivery.

In the discussion that followed it was noted that there were two immediate issues surrounding transportation that required addressing. The first concerned the current ineligibility for employees to have their travel expenses reimbursed and the second focused upon equipment transportation and the requirement for an appropriate vehicle to be provided in order to facilitate this movement for staff. These issues would be investigated in the future.

The Committee discussed publicity and the marketing of the Archives service. It was noted that a recent conference in London surrounding the steel industry could increase public interest in respect of the British Steel Archives. Members considered the literature that could be produced by the authorities in relation to the Archives Service.

It was noted that a recent Community Council visit to the British Steel Archives had been very well received by those in attendance. The Committee wished to congratulate the outreach team for their hard work and success.

ORDERED

That the Performance Report for April – June 2009 be noted.

REVIEW OF TEESSIDE ARCHIVES SERVICE

The Head of Economic and Community Regeneration for Middlesbrough Council presented a report the purpose of which was to:

- (a) Advise the Committee of the findings and outcomes of the review of the Teesside Archives Service;
- (b) Identify a number of options arising from the review;
- (c) Make recommendations to the Committee.

Following the meeting of the Joint Archives Committee on 23 April 2009 the review of the Teesside Archives Service (TAS) had been completed. The purpose of the review was to provide an in depth examination of TAS with regard to its functions and operations, fit for purpose, and cost effectiveness. The need for the review arose from a number of recent changes, particularly to financial arrangements, which were creating upward financial pressures. The Review Team consisted of the following:

- Steering Group: comprising Chief Librarians/Heads of Library Services from each of the four partner local authorities, chaired by Middlesbrough's Head of Economic and Community Regeneration (for the Interim Director of Regeneration);
- Working Group: comprising TAS Acting Manager and a librarian from each of the four local partner authorities.

The scope of the review was agreed by the Joint Archives Committee. In addition, and to provide direction to the review, the Steering Group identified a number of key issues/lines of enquiry for the working group to specifically consider. The Review Report was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

The Working Group was asked to consider savings of 3%, 5% and 10% as a way of focussing thinking around efficiencies. The Review Report provided illustrations of what each would require and their likely impact. Following further discussion by the Steering Group, three options were put forward for consideration by the Joint Archives Committee. The Head of Economic and Community Regeneration explained these options to Members:

- Option 1 – that the Service would continue to be delivered as currently configured (with minor revisions), and a revised budget was to be agreed on this basis. A budget based on this option was attached at Appendix 2 to the report. This option would require an increase in financial contributions from Hartlepool, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Councils.
- Option 2 – that the Service be enhanced to take into account a number of desired improvements arising from the review. A number of suggestions were put forward. It was obviously difficult to propose a budget here given the wide scope of the potential improvements. Therefore a budget including a budget line of £50k for 'Improvements' was appended at appendix 3. Again, this would require an increase in contributions from Hartlepool, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton.
- Option 3 – that the Service be reconfigured within the funding levels currently committed by member Authorities.

There was considerable concern amongst Members regarding option 3, as it was felt that the potential loss of Place of Deposit Status would decimate the Archives Service.

Regarding sources of funding, Members discussed the possibility of charging for the storage of current records. A suggestion was made to find out the legal status of Coroners and Solicitors' records in respect of the time frame in which records were to be held. It was noted that payment for the storage of such records was not being requested at the present time. In addition, the Committee discussed sources of external funding and the involvement of Council officers from each of the four authorities in respect of this. It was noted that this would be looked at in the future.

In relation to the presentation of the financial data contained within the report, it was suggested that the information be tabled side-by-side in order to display the financial implications of each option. The Head of Economic and Community Regeneration agreed to revise the report.

J Nicholson of the Friends of Teesside Archives Group highlighted that a recommendation of the review was that the group would be set an annual income generation target, which would be used to purchase conservation equipment. However it was pointed out that the group were independent and would therefore be unable to offer funding to the Service.

Following extensive discussion, Members agreed that the revised report would be forwarded to the Tees Valley Joint Chief Executives' Group with option 1 identified as the Committee's preferred option.

ORDERED

- (i) that the Head of Economic and Community Regeneration revise the report to reflect the issues raised;**
- (ii) that the Review of Teesside Archives Service report be forwarded to the Tees Valley Joint Chief Executives' Group, along with the Committee's option 1 recommendation, for consideration.**