

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on 14 February 2013.

PRESENT: Councillors C Hill, K Dixon (In the Chair), C Massey (substitute for O Peters) and C M Rooney

OFFICIALS: M Braithwaite, J Brittain, S Cartlidge, M Freeman, J Mennear and R Hobbins

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor O Peters.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting

12/12 MINUTES - 30 AUGUST 2012

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Archives Committee held on 30 August were submitted and approved as a correct record.

12/13 ARCHIVES BUDGET

The Head of Library Services presented a report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the expenditure for Teesside Archives up to 31st December 2012, the projected outturn to 31st March 2013 and the proposed revenue budget for 2013-2014.

Appendix 1 to the report showed the revenue expenditure to the 31 December 2012. The committee was advised that due to a vacancy within the service, which had now been filled, there would be an under-spend on the staffing budget. Any amendments to the final outturn would be reflected in the final Q4 invoices and be reported to each authority.

Appendix 2 outlined the projected budget for 2013-2014. Due, primarily to increases in custodial premises costs, plus an anticipated 1% increase in staff salaries and a slight assumption for inflation, an increase of 2.4% (£4919) was recommended. The percentage increase would be shared across all four local authorities.

Members expressed a view that due to the current financial situation within local government and the cuts being made by each authority, the proposed budget should have been set with zero increase. Although only a small increase was suggested the decision being put to Members was late in the budget planning cycle and the suggestion was made that for the future, a business case should be brought to the attention of Members and officers for all authorities at an earlier stage in the planning process.

Officers explained that the largest part of the increase related to property costs which were largely outside of the control of the authorities, although discussions were presenting taking place around the future of custodial properties. Officers also outlined the difficulty in presenting information earlier and advised that year on year decreases over last two years had been made. Budget projections only could be made at an earlier stage. The suggestion was also made that authorities may wish to consider absorbing the increase through use of the expected rebate, although that would be a matter for each authority to consider separately.

Members agreed to keep the same date for the meeting next year, but requested that papers were circulated two weeks in advance of the meeting, and that Lead Officers meet regularly to discuss operational issues.

ORDERED as follows:

1. That the expenditure on the budget to 31 December 2012 and projected final outturn be noted.

2. That the proposed budget for 2013-2014 be approved, with Councils using their rebate for the current year to absorb the increase if required, and that a full review of the budget be undertaken for 2014-2015.

REASON

The recommendations were supported by the following reason:

To enable the budget for 2013-2014 to be set.

12/14

ACCREDITATION SCHEME

The Archives Manager reported that the introduction of the Archives Accreditation standard by The National Archives would begin in 2013. Services would be expected to achieve the standard in order to maintain their status of Place of Deposit for Public Records although, they would be permitted a period of time up to 2017, in order to bring working practices up to standard.

Officers reported that a main area of concern for Teesside Archives was that there was currently no provision for dealing with 'born digital' records and records digitized by staff and volunteers. Financial implications would also arise due to the need to invest in IT systems in order to care for the records and to improve records management procedures across all four authorities. Further financial investment would also be required in order to improve the condition of current premises and to ensure that staffing levels were sufficiently adequate to deliver expected outreach and education programmes.

Although the services as part of the Library Service was free, it was hoped that further work within the Yorkshire region would help generate additional income; staff would also be looking for further opportunities to increase revenue including through better service provision.

An opportunity to promote the service was extended by the Chair to advertise in Stockton Council's local in-house newspaper 'Stockton News', other local newsletters and through the library. The Archives Manager advised that work on a programme for Local History Month was currently being prepared and the opportunities suggested would be explored.

Officers were asked to ensure that discussion take place both within Middlesbrough Council and with the other authorities IT providers to ensure that where resources are invested in new IT equipment, that provision is compatible across the board.

ORDERED that the following future required actions be noted:

- The need for future investment in IT systems to manage 'born digital' records;
- Better records management practice in all boroughs;
- Investigating the possibility of moving to new premises or investing in the current building;
- Maintaining staffing levels and improving partnership working

REASON

The decision was supported by the following reason:

To inform Members of recommended actions required for the service to reach the necessary standard.

12/15

VISITOR SURVEY

The Archives Manager presented a report outlining the results of the Visitor Survey organized by the Public Services Quality Group carried out over a two week period commencing on 5 November 2012.

In summary, the survey results showed that there had been a slight decline in the service provided, due to the small number of staff available, a vacant post and changes to opening hours. As service users, other than those using the service for family history purposes, could now be identified, this would help to plan for the future and attract more people in the younger age group who may be studying or may use the archives for other reasons. There was a need to reconsider how the service approached issues such as customer consultation when the service was increasingly being delivered in ways other than through visits to the Archive building.

ORDERED that the report be noted.

REASON

The decision was supported by the following reason:

To inform Members of the results of the survey.

12/16 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

ORDERED that the next meeting of the Committee take place on Thursday, 13 February 2014 at 10.30a.m. in the Spencer Room, Town Hall, Middlesbrough.

The decision(s) will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) were made unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures.