

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on Wednesday 8 October 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors P Storey (Chair), Cllr G Allen, P Chaney (Substitute for C Richardson) and N Cooke

OFFICERS: S Fortune, R Hobbins, R Horniman, C Jones, R Kench, G Kirby and M Ramsey

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors C Richardson

25/1 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

In accordance with the agreed protocol for the appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair on a rota basis, the chairmanship transferred to the Member representative from Middlesbrough Council. The Member representative from Stockton, the authority next in rotation for the Chair, was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

AGREED:

- That Councillor P Storey be appointed Chair of the Joint Archives Committee for the Municipal Year 2025/2026.
- That Councillor N Cooke be appointed Vice-Chair of the Joint Archives Committee for the Municipal Year 2025/25.

25/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

25/3 **MINUTES OF THE JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE - 7 MAY 2025**

The minutes of the Joint Archive Committee held on 7 May 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

25/4 **TEESSIDE ARCHIVES EXECUTIVE REPORT**

The Archives Manager was in attendance and presented the Teesside Archives Executive Report to the Committee.

The report highlighted the key areas of activity of the Archive Service.

The Archives Manager discussed the deposits that the Archives had received during the reporting period, a full list was included in the report at Appendix One. The Archives Manager advised of her work on a Lottery funded project with the Tees Women Poets that collected pieces relating to the women's movement from the 1980s, this had resulted in the acquisition of material including the Cleveland Group and its involvement in the Greenham Common peace campaign.

The community outreach figures for the period 1 February – 26 September 2025 were presented at Appendix Two and summarised below. The Archives Manager noted the Community Engagement Officer's efforts to address the imbalance of activity in Hartlepool, as reflected in the data.

Local Authority	No. of People	% of total people
Hartlepool	201	16%
Middlesbrough	499	39%
Redcar & Cleveland	200	16%

Stockton	143	11%
Tees Valley	169	13%
Other	56	4%
TOTAL	1,268	100%

AGREED that the report be noted.

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TEESSIDE ARCHIVES BUDGET UPDATE 2025/26

The Archives Manager presented the Teesside Archives Budget Update 2025/26 which included:

- Income
- Employees
- Premises
- Transport
- Supplies and Services

The 2025 / 2025 Budget Contributions per Local Authority were also presented.

AGREED that the report and expenditure on the 2025-26 budget as itemised at Appendix One, be noted.

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TEESSIDE ARCHIVES INTERIM PROPOSALS

The Head of Culture presented the Teesside Archives Interim Proposals report which sought the Committee's agreement of a series of interim arrangements for the continuation of the Archives Service.

The following interim arrangements were discussed:

1. Service Level Agreement

The outcome of the Heritage Feasibility Study was still awaited; therefore, the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) had been refreshed on a year-to-year basis. A copy of the current SLA was appended to the report at Appendix A. The Committee was asked to consider the following:

- For the Lead Officers to action a review of the SLA and obtain approval through the appropriate channels for a revised agreement which improves decision making and governance in relation to the Archives
- For all four Local Authorities to sign-up to the new SLA for a period of three years (2026/27 – 2028/29); with the possible inclusion of a formal review point half-way through (October 27).

The Chair advised that the Joint Archives Committee had made contact with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ascertain if other public bodies such as TVCA should be included within local archives service. Whilst no formal response had yet been received, local MPs had agreed to raise this issue with the House of Commons.

A discussion took place and Members expressed support for a review of the decision-making governance in the SLA; however, it was agreed that finalising the SLA should be linked to the financial position and the future service model, information which was not yet available.

It was further noted that committing to financial obligations for the next 3 to 5 years would be challenging, although there was recognition that renewing the agreement on a year-to-year basis was not ideal for staff. It was also considered that future proposals could be aligned with potential Arts Council funding in 2028.

It was agreed that the Project Leads would collaborate to develop the vision and present it to the Joint Archives Committee at its March 2026 meeting, for consideration of a 3-year SLA extension.

2. Collections Storage

The Committee were advised that the current 5-year contract with Restore for off-site storage would terminate at the end of June 2026. Within the procurement framework, the Archives were contracted with Restore, with an option to extend the contract for a maximum of two years (July 2026 – June 2028). Restore provided a fee proposal for a 2-year extension to the contract, as shown at Appendix B of the report, which reflected the increases in cost over the past 5 years, during which time costs had remained the same. The proposal represented an overall increase of £4,414.79 in year 1 (around 5%). Year 2 costs would likely increase slightly as Restore wished to include a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment beginning in July 2027.

The Committee agreed to the triggering of the extension of the contract with Restore to July 2028 based on the acceptance of the fee proposal, as shown at Appendix B of the report.

3. Digital Preservation

As had been previously discussed at Joint Archives Committee and Lead Officer meetings, the Archives Service had been struggling to manage its collection of digital records. The current arrangements, which included the use of several hard drives, was unsustainable and made the locating items extremely difficult. As an interim solution, the service had explored the option of a cloud-based system with Middlesbrough's ICT team, which would support better record keeping, but did not address the issue of long-term preservation. A briefing paper on this subject had been discussed at the Joint Archives Committee meeting in May 2025, which outlined the cost (over years 1-3) of purchasing and running a digital preservation system, Preservica.

The New Burdens grant of £115,991 could be used to fund the following:

- £66,810 acquisition of the Preservica system, including 3 years maintenance costs.
- £43,712 for a full-time Grade I Digital Archivist for one year.

An additional £25,000 pa would need to be found in years 2 and 3 for staffing. From year 4 onwards, the costs would increase to £40,250 pa to include the annual Preservica fee.

To work towards a situation where the ongoing costs associated with digital preservation were deemed to be cost neutral to the local authority partners, steps are needed to increase income into the service. Options include:

- a) Increase income into the service through new partners.
- b) Increase income into the service from other service areas.
- c) Increase income into the service from external funding sources.

The Committee was asked to consider the following:

- To agree that a digital preservation system is essential for the management and protection of the records currently held (and will be held in the future) and to fulfilling the responsibilities as an Accredited Archives Service.
- To agree to work collectively with the respective authorities and with each other to find the gap funding required to put digital preservation in place from 2026/27.

The Committee considered the capabilities of the digital system and its potential offerings. It was noted that each Local Authority stored additional records beyond those held by the Archives Service, such as digital birth records and library records and that some Local Authorities were currently developing separate systems for these. The system under discussion, however, could potentially accommodate all of those records and avoid duplication.

While future funding decisions could not be made by the Committee at this stage, the Head of Culture advised that the New Burdens Fund was earmarked for this purpose and would need to be spent as the service could not retain it indefinitely.

It was agreed that the Head of Culture would liaise with Committee Members and Officers to arrange a demonstration of the system, with Data Officers from each Local Authority also included.

4. Outreach Programme

A proposal from the Community Engagement Officer was shown at Appendix C and detailed the delivery of an annual programme of engagement with each borough. The aim was to

create parity across the boroughs, support more effective planning of the Archives Service resources and encourage greater partnership working by supporting what was happening in each Local Authority. A suggested outline for the annual programme was appended and the final programme would need to be measurable and deliverable within the current resource (Community Engagement Officer - 21 hours per week) and agreed with each Local Authority in advance.

The Committee agreed that each Local Authority would provide a named point of contact within their authority to work with the Community Engagement Officer to develop and agree an annual outreach plan, which would commence 2026/27.

AGREED:

- **That Project Leads would collaborate to develop the vision and present it to the Joint Archives Committee at its March 2026 meeting, for consideration of a 3-year Service Level Agreement extension.**
- **To the triggering of the extension of the contract with Restore to July 2028 based on the acceptance of the fee proposal, as shown at Appendix B of the report.**
- **That the Head of Culture would liaise with Committee Members and Officers to arrange a demonstration of the system, with Data Officers from each Local Authority also included.**
- **That each Local Authority would provide a named point of contact within their authority to work with the Community Engagement Officer to develop and agree an annual outreach plan, which would commence 2026/27.**

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ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED

None.