

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on Wednesday 1 March 2023.

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Steve Nelson, S Hill and Moore

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillors

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Member of the public

OFFICERS: Susie Blood, Richard Horniman, Leigh Keeble, Ruth Hobbins, Laura Case, Tara Connor and Gaye Kirby

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: L Westbury

22/10 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

22/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

22/12 **MINUTES- JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE- 12 OCTOBER 2022**

The minutes from the Joint archives committee held on 12 October 2022, were submitted and accepted as a true record.

22/13 **ACTIONS - FROM THE MINUTES OF 12 OCTOBER 2022**

ACTION 1:

An update on community engagement be brought to every meeting of the joint archives committee.

- New Executive report now includes a section on community engagement.

ACTION 2:

Further promotion be made on the community engagement events through social media channels e.g. Enjoy Teesside website.

- Events are published through council websites and Teesside Archives social media channels

ACTION 3:

Consider developing a Communications and marketing strategy.

- A formal strategy would not be developed per se, but where local authorities have provided marketing contacts, the Archives team has been in touch to agree plans for future promotion.

ACTION 4

Take information regarding archives to the Creative Place Advisory group- TVCA

- The future development of the Archives has been discussed at the Creative Place Advisory Group within the context of the new heritage framework being developed by TVCA in partnership with the sector.

ACTION 5

Future developments to be added to a standard items.

- Whilst this had not been included on this agenda, future agendas' would include a standard item.

22/14

TEESSIDE ARCHIVES EXECUTIVE REPORT

Gaye Kirby, Creative Programmes and Partnership Manager presented the update regarding Teesside Archives.

The report focused on the following aspects:

- Collections
- Public engagement and outreach
- Conservation and preservation
- Digital preservation
- Marketing and communication
- KPIs
- Future development of the service
- Miscellaneous

The Manager focused on a number of issues within the report:

Service level agreement- This expired in April 2022, however this would now be readdressed after the election in May 2023.

AGREED- that the service level agreement be aligned with the terms of reference, however brought to a future meeting of the committee due to its constitutional aspects.

Frequently of meetings- there were currently 2 meetings scheduled in the diary. It was agreed that if there was further demand for meetings, these could be established on an ad hoc basis.

Terms of reference – these were now historic. The current terms of reference of the Joint Committee advise that the committee has full power to make further rules regarding its proceedings and the conduct of its business, and to vary such rules, as it may from time to time consider appropriate, provided that at least three members vote in favour of the resolution.

AGREED- That the Director of Regeneration amend the current terms of reference, which would include, for example, that information from the lead officer group be fed into the joint committee in the form of an action plan. The amended terms of reference, along with the service level agreement would be circulated to the committee in due course.

Digitisation- the manager outlined that funding has been received from the National Archives (£97.7K) which had been proposed to use to support the creation of a central repository for preserving born-digital public records and records from the four Local Authorities.

The manager outlined that digital preservation ensures that digital archives can be accessed in the long term by actively managing them to ensure they remain readable. A Digital Preservation system identifies file formats so that records can be migrated to other formats over time, with a clear audit trail.

To help scope the project, representatives from Governance and ICT teams from each Local Authority were invited to join the Lead Officers meeting on 18 January, where specialist archives consultant Simon Wilson joined us.

It was agreed that there are two key parts to the project:

1. Devising and agreeing protocols for identifying which digital records are to be transferred to the Archives
2. Specifying, procuring and setting up a system for preserving the digital records

With reference to the part two of the project, there are currently two systems on the market:

- Archivematica: Open-source software used widely in the HE sector.
- Preservica: Cloud-based system used widely in Local Authorities and business sectors.

It was agreed at the meeting that the Archives staff team would form a project group to develop a specification, establish costs (including ongoing costs) and provide a definition of the categories of records that we should be keeping.

The manager outlined that progress has been halted until there is a directive from JAC as to how the money should be used. This may depend on whether some of the money is required to support the core archives budget going forward.

The ongoing cost of a digital preservation system was likely to be in the region of £15-16K a year (increasing marginally as more data is added) and there would need to be a commitment to which all four Local Authorities would need to sign up to.

Until a decision is made, digital records will continue to be held on hard drives, but this isn't a satisfactory long-term solution as there is no active preservation of these records to ensure they remain readable.

Stockton representative advised that they were committed to the project, but further information was required to ensure there was no duplication and that we have a detailed policy outlined retention periods etc.

AGREED- that in principle the Joint committee agree to pursue digitisation, however the Lead officer group to explore further, and report back at the next meeting of the Joint committee.

Future developments- an additional paper had been provided to the joint committee outlining the purpose of the archives, and its future. Within the paper the committee were drawn to the information relating to the Tees Valley combined authority, who were TVCA is currently developing a framework for investment into heritage to drive economic growth within the Tees Valley.

Under the working title of 'Our Ordinary is Extraordinary', the framework seeks to support a sub-regional approach to celebrating the shared and connected heritage of our remarkable place, utilising TVCA's existing investment pillars to develop a heritage offer worthy of national and international recognition. Although early in discussions within the framework, Teesside Archives is envisioned to be central to a 'hub and spoke' model of heritage discovery, with a new and sustainable archives facility sitting at the heart of a re-imagined visitor offer sending people out across the region to discover more. A fall back fall would need to be put in place if the funding was not provided.

There was also an in-depth discussion surrounding budget pressures, and the impact this would have on the future of the archives.

The report further contained a timeline/ roadmap of key milestones and actions. The feasibility study was due to be completed by 2024, however queries were made into the possibility of bringing this forward and seeking specialist support of the National Archives/ archives specialist to assist with this.

AGREED- That delegated authority be given to the Lead officer group to provide a brief to be on the feasibility study and to be reported back to the Joint archives committee

The Director of Regeneration submitted a report to update members on the outcome of the 2022-23 revenue budget for Teesside Archives and seek approval for the proposed budget for 2023-24.

Wednesday 1st March, 2023

The 2023/24 budget reflects the increased costs of providing the archives service, due to received and expected staff pay awards and third-party storage charges from Restore.

Following the last meeting, conversations had taken place with all the local authorities in relation to the contributions. All members commented that the conversations/consultations had been useful.

The Director outlined that the proposed budget reflects an understanding reached in these meetings that it is fair and reasonable for the increase in salary costs to be shared by all four authorities. However, we have offset any further increases to the overall budget by committing additional income in the form of either an investment from TVCA (our preferred option) or applying a portion of the New Burdens funding. This has been done in order to try to maintain the commitments from each Local Authority at an acceptable level.

It was worth noting that managing the proposed storage/retrieval budget at £76K for the year is likely to require stricter controls in terms of items accessioned to the collection, as well as less frequent recall of items. The volume of collections currently stored with Restore will cost £63K a year if we don't add to it. This leaves just over £1K a month for any additional storage and for recalling items for customers, outreach, essential conversation, etc.

In the contributions proposed from each Local Authority, the Director advised that Members should note that the figures include the 'support costs' which are paid on an equal basis and therefore do not reflect the population figures accurately.

Members outlined that they would like exploration into the funding model as to whether this is the correct formula for Joint archives.

AGREED-

1. That the proposed budget for 2023-24 be approved.
2. That the lead officers group look further at the funding contributions and report back to the joint committee.
3. That further targeted outreach activities be undertaken with Hartlepool and Stockton, to ensure that there is better balance in engagement across the four local authorities.

22/16

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