

JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Archives Committee was held on Wednesday 2 October 2024.

PRESENT: Councillors C Male (Chair), C Cooke - Elected Mayor and S Nelson

OFFICERS: T Connor, R Hobbins, R Horniman, C Jones, G Kirby and M Ramsey

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors C Richardson and P Storey

24/33 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Name of Member	Type of Interest	Item / Nature of Business
Cllr C Cooke	Non-pecuniary	TVCA Cabinet Member
Cllr S Nelson	Non-pecuniary	TVCA Overview and Scrutiny Member

24/34 **MINUTES OF THE JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE - 6TH MARCH 2024**

The minutes of the Joint Archive Committee held on 19 October 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/35 **TEESSIDE ARCHIVES EXECUTIVE REPORT INCLUDING FUTURE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT**

The Head of Culture and Archives Manager were in attendance and presented the Executive report to the committee.

The report outlined the following:

Collections

The service had taken significant records of Women's Institute Teesside Federation, as they had to unexpectedly vacate their premises. Other deposits had included: deeds from Stockton Council including plans for Thornaby Aerodrome, Cricket Club material from Hartlepool and Wolviston, sketch books by Baker Hudson; librarian and curator of Dorman Museum (1889-1920's), records from Guisborough Town Hall including title deeds from Brotton Estates.

Public Access and Outreach

The service had continued to be very busy and had worked to develop sessions that covered a wider area. It was noted that improved links with libraries had been developed.

Conservation and Preservation

It was noted that the following archives had been cleaned, packaged and repaired:

- ICI Billingham Nylon works photographs
- Large collection of W.I. records covering the whole region
- U/BLM photographic collection covering mostly Middlesbrough
- U/GTH early parchment documents with two examples of Royal seals from the Guisborough area
- Redcar and Cleveland Planning Department photographic collection
- Original building plans for The Crown in Middlesbrough
- West Hartlepool building plans

The Archives Manager reported that the dispute with Restore over the increase in fees to the service has been satisfactorily resolved and credit notes had been issued by Restore to cover the excess charges for which there wasn't provision in the 5-year contract.

Digital Preservation

A way forward with respect to Digital Preservation had been discussed at the Archives Lead Officers meeting on 24 July. At the meeting, it had been agreed that there were three key actions for the Archives Service to progress:

1. To provide Local Authorities with clarity on what records need to be transferred to the Archives
2. To agree a plan for how long-term digital preservation is done across the four Local Authorities
3. To decide if the Archives Service is committed to born-digital preservation.

Marketing and Communication

The service had celebrated its 50th birthday on Friday 5 April with an event at the Dorman to which all heads of service and elected members were invited. The event received some press coverage and was attended by three Teesside Mayors as well as a representative from the Arts Council.

Key Performance Indicators

The visits to the archives from April to August 2024 were presented as follows:

Local Authority	No. of Visitors	% of total
Hartlepool	24	3.7%
Middlesbrough	269	41.8%
Redcar & Cleveland	77	12%
Stockton	77	12%
Other UK	189	29.4%
Rest of the world	7	1.1%
TOTAL	643	100%

Total number of document issues (April – August 2024): 1,739

Total number of enquiries (April – August 2024): 1,327

Total number of volunteer hours (April – August 2024): 794

The Engagement Activity delivered by Local Authority from March to August 2024 was presented as follows:

Local Authority	No. of People	% of total people
Hartlepool	3	0.2%
Middlesbrough	332	21.9%
Redcar & Cleveland	372	24.6%
Stockton	316	20.9%
Tees Valley	306	20.2%
Other	185	12.2%
TOTAL	1,514	100%

A discussion took place in respect of the low Engagement Activity figure for Hartlepool. It was noted that although this was concerning, it was likely due to poor marketing and the unique cultural offer of Hartlepool. This would be investigated further.

Future Development of the Service

The Archive Service Accreditation application had completed in time for the July deadline and all policies and procedures were reviewed and updated. The accreditation validation visit took place at the Dorman Museum on 6th September. It was hoped the report would be available in conjunction with the feasibility study when considering future options for the service.

The Heritage Feasibility Study, commissioned by TVCA, was progressing and members of the Archives team had been involved in focus group sessions and as part of the wider stakeholder group to inform the future vision and strategy for the Archives Service. In the next stage of work, Focus (lead consultant) would hold conversations at a senior level with each Local Authority partner to ensure a strong understanding of the particular contexts that each Local Authority was working in, with regard to priorities, structures, budgets, staffing, governance etc.

The topics for these sessions would be:

- Organisational priorities and status of the heritage service within future plans
- Financial model and position of the heritage service / assets
- Property ownership / leasing
- Live / pipeline funding bids
- Capital needs / plans
- Workforce
- Challenges & possible mitigations
- Future ambitions

The timetable for the completion of the feasibility work was delayed and the final report was now expected in December. The Head of Culture has asked TVCA if the Archives options appraisal element of the wider feasibility may be available earlier than that.

In the context of the feasibility study being delayed and individual Local Authority concerns regarding next year's budget, a discussion took place around the implications of one or more Local Authority partner(s) exiting the Joint Archives Service agreement. It was agreed that more work needs to be done to understand the statutory responsibilities in relation to public records and potential costs of disaggregation.

The Head of Service reported that the Archivist, Lara Moon, is expecting a baby and will be going on maternity leave early spring 2025. A plan to cover priority areas of Lara's work will be put together and proposed via the Archives Leads Officers group. The Committee recorded their best wishes to Lara and family.

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TEESSIDE ARCHIVES BUDGET

The Archives Manager presented the Teesside Archives budget which included:

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

The 2024 / 2025 Budget Contributions per Local Authority were also presented.

A discussion took place in respect of the Middlesbrough allocation as the Middlesbrough figures were missing from the budget line. It was noted that this was due to Middlesbrough being the host Local Authority, therefore holding the budget. A note to explain the budget breakdown would be provided on the next Teesside Archives Budget Report.

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

It was agreed that an additional meeting of the Joint Archives Committee is to be scheduled for mid-January 2025, to enable the TVCA Feasibility Study to be considered and review the work done to better understand what any disaggregation of the service would look like, ahead of budget planning.