

Joint Archives Committee, 5 March 2025

Interim Service Arrangements

1. Service Level Agreement

The current Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the Teesside Archives Service was extended earlier this year, with the agreement of the JAC, to 31 March 2025. A one-year agreement was deemed to be appropriate at that time, on the basis that we were expecting to have the outcomes from the heritage feasibility work in October/November 2024 to inform what the governance structure needs to look like going forward. This work is however delayed and not expected until January 2025 so is likely to be presented to the JAC in full in March 2025.

Therefore, we are proposing that the committee agree a further one-year extension to the existing Service Level Agreement to 31 March 2026 to allow time for proposals around the future governance of the service to be properly considered. If in agreement, this will be done by a Deed of Variation exactly as before with the new date incorporated and signed by all four authorities.

We have previously discussed making changes to the existing SLA including around decision-making authority, however, as the JAC is an executive function of the council, a change of this nature would require an approval process beyond the authority of the Executive Members on JAC. It therefore seems reasonable to hold off making any fundamental changes until we know what's required to support a new vision and operating model for Teesside Archives.

Please see **Appendix B** (Governance of Teesside Archives Memo 201224) for further detail from MBC's Legal Department on the current governance arrangements for Teesside Archives and how any changes to the SLA would need to be made.

2. Budget Setting 25/26

A proposed budget for 25/26 will be presented to JAC for approval at its meeting on 5 March.

3. Staffing Arrangements

a) Current Arrangements

The current staffing provision for Teesside Archives Service is shown in the table below.

Position	FTE
Archives Manager (qualified archivist)	1
Archivist	1
Conservator	1
Community Engagement Officer	0.5
Archive Supervisor	0.7
Archive Assistant	0.5
Total	4.7 FTE

Current staffing levels equate to 1.2 FTE per local authority.

b) Archivist Maternity Leave

From March 2025, Lara Moon (Archivist) will be taking maternity leave and is expected to be off for 12 months. In order to minimise additional costs during this period, we are proposing to employ a flexible arrangement to increase the hours of the Archive Assistant and Community Engagement Officer as and when required to provide support for the service. Where this incurs additional costs, over and above the agreed salary budget, we will utilise the New Burdens funding to cover those costs. This will limit any development work within the service and may require the service to carefully manage its acquisition policy in order not to overwhelm the team.

c) Future staffing

Future staffing arrangements should be considered in the context of the new operational model to be agreed by JAC further to receipt of the Heritage Feasibility report. Some initial work has been done on staffing provision for different options as part of the feasibility.

However, it is also clear from the benchmarking exercise undertaken by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan that resourcing of Teesside Archives is low compared to other shared local authority archives services and consideration should be given to specific areas of the service identified as a risk, such as digital preservation, to agree how we should progress and what resource this requires.

In addition to the existing staffing establishment, we are likely to require a full-time Digital Engagement/Archivist post (circa Grade J, £35,235 – 37,035) to work on bringing born digital records into the archives, as well as managing the public-facing digital platforms including the procurement of a new cataloguing system (our current system is being withdrawn in 4 years' time). This could be a fixed term post with very specific objectives whilst the longer-term plans are developed in detail. We would suggest approaching TVCA for support in this area and/or utilising New Burdens funding (current balance of £116,000). If we're in a position to put this in place in 25/26 it will also help to cover for the Archivist maternity leave.

d) Storage

The current 5-year Restore contract for storing the Teesside Archives collection ends in July 2026. There is provision in the contract to extend the contract up to a maximum of 5 x 12-month periods, however the procurement framework only allows a maximum length contract of 7 years in total i.e. to July 2028. There is no obligation for Restore to agree to an extension (although they are unlikely to refuse) and at that point they will be in a position to vary the fees. As they have already attempted to do that mid-contract it's almost certain that this will be proposed. So, it may be worth looking into reprocurring it as there may be better value in a new agreement or provider, since there is plenty of time until it expires.

On the assumption that we're unlikely to have secured a new Archive facility with on-site storage by July 2026, we have begun to explore storage options for an interim period. Unfortunately, it's a relatively small market in terms of companies that provide storage conditions to the National Archives Standard e.g. Deepstore and Upper Hayford.

Conversations have begun with other partners locally to assess if there's a desire for shared storage space, but the challenge will be about finding space that can meet the high standards required. We'll continue to explore options and aim to bring detailed proposals to the JAC in October.

e) Funding

Once we have a direction of travel for the Archives Service, we will be in a position to speak to prospective funders (e.g. TVCA, National Lottery Heritage Fund) about any support in the short, medium and long-term. Having a clear action/activity plan which will move us towards our agreed vision for the service will be imperative to securing investment.

ENDS