

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Director of Regeneration
Relevant Executive Member:	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture
Submitted to:	Joint Archives Committee
Date:	8 October 2025
Title:	Proposals for Interim Arrangements for the Archives Service
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	Delivering Best Value
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Subject to call in?	For endorsement
Why:	To enable the service to deliver its core function

Proposed decision(s)

That JAC agree to the following proposals:

- a) 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.
- b) For all four local authorities to sign-up to the new agreement for a period of three years (2026/27 – 2028/29); with the possible inclusion of a formal review point half-way through (October 27).
- c) To trigger the extension of the contract with Restore to July 2028 based on our acceptance of the fee proposal (Appendix B).
- d) To agree that a digital preservation system is essential for the management and protection of the records we hold (and will hold in the future) and to fulfilling our responsibilities as an Accredited Archives Service.
- e) To agree to work collectively with our respective authorities and with each other to find the gap funding required to put digital preservation in place from 2026/27.
- f) For each Local Authority to provide a named point of contact within their authority to work with the Community Engagement Officer to develop and agree an annual outreach plan, starting 2026/27.

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Executive summary

This report is designed to seek agreement from all four local authority partners on the direction of Teesside Archives over the next 3 years.

It's fair to say that the service has been in a holding position for the last couple of years awaiting the outcomes of the Tees Valley Heritage Feasibility Study to be completed. The publication of that report is still awaited (an update is expected from TVCA w/c 29 September) and there is not yet consensus on how any of the recommendations made in respect of the Archives Service will be taken forward. Even if this was in place, it would still be several years before a new Archives facility was ready to open. Therefore, it's important that we agree plans to enable the ongoing management of the service in the short to medium term.

Having a plan in place is also essential to the service maintaining its Accreditation with the National Archives, which is currently 'provisional' awaiting clearer plans for the development of the service.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

1.1 For JAC to agree a series of interim arrangements for the continuation of the Archives Service.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attract and grow businesses to increase employment opportunities - Improve attainment in education and skills - Ensure housing provision meets local demand
A healthy Place	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve life chances of our residents by responding to health inequalities - protect and improve our environment - promote inclusivity for all - reduce poverty
Safe and resilient communities	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support adults to be independent for longer - improve transport and digital connectivity - promote new ideas and community initiatives - reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
Delivering best value	<i>Aims within this ambition are to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure robust and effective corporate governance - set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to restore financial resilience and sustainability

2. Recommendations

2.1 That JAC agree to the following proposals:

- 2.1.1 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.
- 2.1.2 For all four local authorities to sign-up to the new agreement for a period of three years (2026/27 – 2028/29); with the possible inclusion of a formal review point half-way through (October 27).
- 2.1.3 To trigger the extension of the contract with Restore to July 2028 based on our acceptance of the fee proposal (Appendix B).
- 2.1.4 To agree that a digital preservation system is essential for the management and protection of the records we hold (and will hold in the future) and to fulfilling our responsibilities as an Accredited Archives Service.
- 2.1.5 To agree to work collectively with our respective authorities and with each other to find the gap funding required to put digital preservation in place from 2026/27.

- 2.1.6 For each Local Authority to provide a named point of contact within their authority to work with the Community Engagement Officer to develop and agree an annual outreach plan, starting 2026/27.

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 Service Level Agreement:

Whilst awaiting the outcome of the Heritage Feasibility work, we have been rolling forward the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) on a year-to-year basis. This provides very little security for the service, wastes administration time, and it is considered that the existing SLA is outdated and doesn't support effective decision making for the Archives. A copy of the current SLA is attached as Appendix A.

3.2 Collections Storage:

The current 5-year contract with Restore for off-site storage terminates at the end of June 2026. Within the procurement framework we employed to contract with Restore, we have an option to extend the contract for a maximum of two years (July 2026 – June 2028).

Restore have provided a fee proposal for a 2-year extension to the contract (see Appendix B) which reflects the increases in cost over the past 5 years, during which time our costs have remained the same.

The proposal represents an overall increase of £4,414.79 in year 1 (around 5%). Year 2 costs would likely increase slightly as Restore wish to include a Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment beginning in July 2027.

3.3 Digital Preservation:

As has been discussed at both JAC and lead officer meetings, the Archives Service is struggling to manage its collection of digital records. The current arrangements, which include use of several hard drives, is unsustainable and makes locating items extremely difficult.

As an interim solution the service is exploring the option of a Cloud based system with Middlesbrough's ICT team, which should support better record keeping, but does not address the issue of long-term preservation.

A briefing paper on this subject was discussed at the Joint Archives Meeting in May, which outlined the cost (over years 1-3) of purchasing and running a digital preservation system – Preservica.

Digital Preservation Costs (Years 1-3)

	Preservica	Staffing	Total	Propose Funded from
Year 1	£36,310	£43,172 (Grade I, top of scale, plus on costs)	£79,482	£79,482: New Burdens
Year 2	£15,250	£25,000 - Investment in ongoing staff resource would be required – TBC depending on the number of partners depositing records.	£40,250	£15,250: New Burdens £25,000: Archive Partners
Year 3	£15,250	£25,000 – As above	£40,250	£15,250: New Burdens £25,000: Archive Partners
Total	£66,810	£93,172	£159,982`	£109,982: New Burdens £50,000: Archive Partners

A detailed above, the New Burdens grant of £115,991 can be used to fund the following:

- £66,810 acquisition of the Preservica system, including 3 years running/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.

The table below shows the cost of the increase to the OLA's should funding not be found from other sources. This is based on the Year 4 onwards costs, as these are the highest.

Table 2: Additional Cost to LA's from Year 4

Authority	Cost	Cost + Uplift
Hartlepool	6,637.23	7,168.20
Middlesbrough	9,849.18	10,637.11
Redcar & Cleveland	9,728.43	10,506.70
Stockton	14,035.18	15,157.99
	40,250.00	43,470.00

Options to Fund Preservica

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

a) Increase income into the service through new partners

We have actively sought advice from DCMS about public bodies, e.g. Combined Authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners, as to their responsibilities for maintaining and making accessible records of public interest that they generate. We are still awaiting a response on this and are actively chasing. Any positive affirmation from DCMS would support our case to the likes of TVCA to join the JAC as a funding partner.

We have separately approached Teesside University to assess their potential interest in joining the service as a partner, but they have advised that this would be unlikely, but that they would potentially be interested in partnering on a capital development should that be the direction that we take longer term.

We have approached Tees Valley Museums Group to explore how the Archives might be integrated into the Tees Valley Museums Group NPO in the next funding round, which starts 2028/29. The suggestion from the TVMG Chair is to use the next couple of years to forge a closer working relationship with the Archives Service, which could involve the development of partnership programmes around outreach and digital access, and align the work of the Archives more closely with Arts Council's Let's Create Strategy.

b) Increase income into the service from other service areas

The Preservica system would have value beyond the Archives Service as it could also manage and preserve born digital and digitised records from other service areas including museums and libraries. We know, for example, that there is a significant oral history collection, much of it on cassette, which could be digitised, catalogued and preserved through Preservica.

c) Increase income into the service from external funding sources

We are currently exploring opportunities, including the National Archives Revealed Fund, for investment into our digital programme. Some funds will support revenue/staffing costs, although this would only be for the period of the grant and not beyond.

3.4 Outreach Programme:

We have separately shared a proposal from the Community Engagement Officer (see Appendix C) for the delivery of an annual programme of engagement with each borough. The aim is to create parity across the boroughs, support more effective planning of the

Archives Service resources and encourage greater partnership working by supporting what's happening in each LA.

A suggested outline for the annual programme has been shared for comments. The final programme would need to be measurable, deliverable within the resource that we have (Community Engagement Officer is 21 hours per week), and agreed with each borough in advance so that it aligns with their cultural priorities.

4. Background and relevant information

Detailed in Section 3 above.

5. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

N/A

6. Potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

N/A

7. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	LA's maintaining financial commitment to the Archives for a further 3 years.
Legal	SLA extended by 3 years and revised to assist improved governance and decision-making.
Risk	Risks around continued housing of the Archives collection, disaggregation of the service if the joint arrangements aren't continued, and inability to manage and preserve digital records. All of the above also pose a risk to the Accreditation of the Archives Service from National Archives.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	
Reducing Poverty	
Climate Change / Environmental	
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	
Data Protection	

Appendices

A	Teesside Archives Service Level Agreement
B	Restore Fee Proposal (From July 2026)
C	Teesside Archives Outreach Programme Proposal (From April 2026)

Background papers

N/A

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