

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Director of Environment, Communities & Culture
Relevant Executive Member:	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture
Submitted to:	Joint Archives Committee
Date:	4 March 2026
Title:	Executive Report
Report for:	Information
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?	No
Why:	Not a key decision

Proposed decision(s)
That JAC notes the content of the report and considers the draft Teesside Archives Strategy.

Executive summary
The report highlights key areas of the activity of the Archive Service in the current reporting period. As an appendix to this report, there is a draft 10-year Archives Strategy for discussion.

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

1.1 To provide an update on activity within Teesside Archives to the Joint Archives Committee.

Our ambitions	Summary of how this report will support delivery of these ambitions and the underpinning aims
A successful and ambitious town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilling the statutory responsibilities of our public organisations. • Holding organisations and individuals to account. • Promoting pride through learning about past achievements. • Recording and conserving the history of our people and places for future generations. • Creating employment opportunities through proposed changes to the staffing structure.
A healthy Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring access to the Archives for all. • Supporting the recollection & sharing of memories. • Promoting a culture of knowledge and learning.
Safe and resilient communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people discover more about their lives; past and present. • Giving value to people and events who have shaped our lives today. • Helping us to understand who we are. • Inspiring creativity and collaboration. • Reflecting the rich diversity of our communities.
Delivering best value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making records available to support effective decision-making and good governance. • Creating maximum value from the modest additional investment required.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee notes the report and discusses the draft 10-year Strategy,

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

N/A

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 Collections

The service has continued to take in deposits including: records from the Fiesta Night Club in Norton; the design work from the artist responsible for the dinosaur sculptures at Teesaurus Park; records relating to the establishment of the Fire Brigade at Redcar; and some interesting photographs of Redcar taken before the Second World War.

In February, our Conservator, Helen, collected the contents of a time capsule discovered on the site of the Old Town Hall, which is currently undergoing redevelopment. The capsule was found in the foundation corner stone whilst excavating a long deep trench in the area of the clock tower.

The documents include three newspapers and a handwritten parchment document, which records the laying of the foundation stone by the Mayor, Henry Thompson, on Saturday 25th September 1858. The ceremony was also attended by the town's 'great and good' including Isaac Wilson, Henry Bolckow and John Vaughan. At least one of the newspapers mentions the laying of the foundation stone and the time capsule.

Helen brought the documents back to the Archives conservation studio where they have been assessed and placed under light weights. They are stable but Helen will be carrying out further conservation work once they have been viewed in their present state.

The discovery highlights the importance of the Archives and the role of the conservator to be able to respond instantly to rescue finds of this nature and ensure that our history remains intact and made accessible to the public.

A full list of deposits received in this reporting period is included in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 Community Outreach

Appendix 2 provides full details of the outreach sessions held between 27 September 2025 and 16 February 2026.

There has been an endeavour to work more equitably across the boroughs, and the overall picture across the year has improved, although this is not reflected in this period alone. More is planned across the boroughs in the coming months and action plans for the next 12 months will be agreed with each borough individually and reported in future reports to JAC. It's worth noting that the quantity of work in this area has had to reduce in this period due to the absence of the Archivist (Maternity Leave) and the resulting pressure on the service.

Local Authority	No. of People	% of total people
Hartlepool	20	5%
Middlesbrough	291	66%
Redcar & Cleveland	59	13%
Stockton	49	11%

Tees Valley	20	5%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL	439	100%

4.3 Public Access & General Operations

The service has continued to run as normal, but we have seen a decline in the in-person visits to the public search room. We now receive more enquiries via email and social media that require staff and volunteer time to resource. The service operates within the constraints of the number of documents we are able to recall from Restore at one time, and the space available, which means that despite the numbers, the public area is often full.

Visits to the Archives Service and details of enquiries and document issues are detailed below.

In person visits to the Archives from October 2025 – January 2026

Local Authority	No. of Visitors	% of total
Hartlepool	45	4%
Middlesbrough	620	56%
Redcar & Cleveland	145	13%
Stockton	147	13%
Other UK	138	13%
Rest of the world	11	1%
TOTAL	1,106	100%

Total number of document issues (Oct 25 – Jan 26): 52,098

Total number of enquiries (Oct 25 – Jan 26 Feb – Sep 25): 2,996

Total number of volunteer hours (Feb – Sep 25): 738

4.4 Future Strategy

A draft 10-year Strategy for Teesside Archives is included as **Appendix 3** to set out the proposed vision, mission and short/medium/long-term objectives for the service. It is

essential that we are able to articulate an agreed forward plan for the Archives, which is supported by the Joint Archives Committee and provides a clear mandate for the direction in which to take the service.

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)	N/A
Legal	N/A
Risk	N/A
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	N/A
Reducing Poverty	N/A
Climate Change / Environmental	N/A
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	N/A
Data Protection	N/A

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
A second iteration of the Archives Strategy to be produced following comments from JAC.	Head of Culture	April 2026

Appendices

1	Archives Deposits 2025-26
2	Engagement Statistics (Oct 25 – Jan 26)
3	Teesside Archives Strategy 2026-2036 DRAFT

Background papers

N/A

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