

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2012

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr T Wright
Mrs J Leggett

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Ms K Robinson-Payne

Breckland District Council

Mr P Duigan

Norwich City Council

Ms D Carlo

Broadland District Council

Mr J Bracey

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Mrs E Nockolds

South Norfolk District Council

Dr C J Kemp (Vice-Chairman)

Non-Voting Members

Co-Opted Member

Mr M Begley
Dr G Metters

Observer

Dr V Morgan

Representative of the Bishop of Norwich

Revd C Read

Dr C Kemp (Vice-Chairman) in the Chair.

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Murphy (Mrs J Leggett substituted), Professor C Rawcliffe, Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds, Prof. R Wilson, Mr R Jewson and Ms V Thomas.

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2012 were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

3. Matters of Urgent Business

- 3.1 There were no items of urgent business.

4. Declarations of Interest

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. Norfolk Record Office – Performance and Budget Report 2012/13

- 5.1 The annexed report (5) by the County Archivist was received. The report provided information on performance against service plans and budget out-turn information

for 2012/13 for the Norfolk Record Office (NRO).

5.2 During the presentation of the report, the Committee were asked to note that the first bullet point in the Executive Summary of the report should read:

- At the end of September 2012, the NRO is predicting a small budget underspend of £0.034m which related to staff vacancies within the Corporate Freedom of Information Team, which is housed in The Archive Centre and managed by the County Archivist.

5.3 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- There was no means of identifying if the recorded visitor numbers were new visitors or repeat visitors. The information was based on how many visitors attended the Norfolk Record Office on any particular day and therefore they could have been counted more than once if they were return visitors.
- The reduction in visitor numbers could in part be attributed to the amount of material which was now available on the internet and that people researching family history and genealogy were able to access information without needing to visit the Norfolk Record Office.

RESOLVED

5.4 To note the performance with the 2012/13 service plan and the performance with the revenue budget and reserves and provisions for 2012/13.

6. Service and Budget Planning 2013-15 for the Norfolk Record Office

6.1 The annexed report (6) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report set out the financial and planning context for the authority and gave specific service information for the Norfolk Record Office for the next financial year.

6.2 The report covered the period 2013-14, as no corporate information was yet available beyond 2014 and no changes from the Big Conversation, undertaken in 2010, had been carried forward.

6.3 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- Norfolk Record Office had made a commitment to ensuring as much information as possible was accessible on line, therefore the increased access to the digital information at the Norfolk Record Office was considered an opportunity rather than a threat to services.
- Negotiations were currently taking place with a number of companies to determine financial arrangements for digitising additional information and making it accessible via the website. There was always a likely risk of an adverse impact on income generation with the availability of digital information on line. When the digitising programme had initially been established in 1997 the County Council's priority was to make as much information as possible available to everyone, rather than to make a profit. If the project were being instigated today, it was likely a more commercial approach would be adopted with regard to accessing the on-line information.

- Family history researchers remained the largest users of the service and the majority of the on line digital information and material was aimed at family historians.

6.4 **RESOLVED** to

- a) Agree the revised service and financial planning context and assumptions and
- b) Note the revised spending pressures and savings for the Norfolk Record Office arising from those assumptions.

7. **Risk Register**

7.1 The annexed report (7) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report set out the latest version of the Norfolk Record Office's risk register and invited comments from the Committee.

7.2 The Committee noted that two principal risks (RM13964 – A lack of effective site security and RM14077 – Failure to follow data protection procedures) had met their targets since the last review.

7.3 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- With regard to RM13964 (A lack of effective site security), there had been no incidents to compromise site security, but the risk had been added to the register to raise consciousness of those possible risks. Although the target had now been met, it remained on the register as a reminder of the need to be vigilant.
- RM14077 (Failure to follow data protection procedures) was a Norfolk Record Office version of a corporate risk, bespoke versions of which now appeared on local risk registers throughout the County Council.
- With regard to RM13963 (Long-term staff shortage), the Norfolk Record Office was taking steps to ensure succession planning took place so that the skills mix was continued. This was a potential medium to long-term risk. Currently there were five archivists on the staff who could read documents in Latin, including the project archivists working on The National Archives-funded project on the Norfolk Manorial Documents Register.
- Dr Kemp suggested that a recognised form of hatching with a coded key should be used in all performance reports to distinguish the different levels of risk rather than using solid colours. He added that this way of doing things had been done in the past and that examples could be found in documents in the Norfolk Record Office. This suggestion would be considered and a response provided to Dr Kemp.

7.4 **RESOLVED** to note the report.

8. **Periodic Report, 1 April – 30 September 2012**

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report set out the activities of the Norfolk Record Office during the period,

giving Performance Indicators and listing the accessions received during the period.

8.2 The report showed that the Norfolk Record Office had a very successful half year in terms of the acquisitions they had made.

8.3 The following points were noted in response to questions from the Committee:

- Norfolk Record Office offered a free service to undertake surveys of archives and carry out site visits to look at archival material.
- Mr Duigan wished to express his formal thanks to Susan Maddock for the work she had completed for the Dereham Antiquarian Society's store at East Dereham.
- The survey carried out at Norwich City Hall did not include any material from the Police Station at Bethel Street. Any archive material from the Police Authority tended to be acquired from Police Headquarters at Wymondham or from other Police sources, such as officers who had retired from the service.
- The Fire Service had also donated material about Norfolk Fire and Rescue Services from the Headquarters at Hethersett and Bethel Street Fire Station.
- Members congratulated the Norfolk Record Office on their significant achievement of the retro-conversion of records acquired by Norwich Public Library before 1963 which had converted cards in the searchroom, filed by place, person and subject into a draft catalogue, 70% of which was now available via the Record Office's online catalogue, NROCAT.
- The retro-conversion was a major project which had refocused the efforts of the Norfolk Record Office on cataloguing. The 208 new catalogues represented some 25cubic metres of files, which was a significant achievement.
- The County Archivist would find out how work on conserving the Bergh Apton tithe map was progressing and let the Committee know. Note: Following the meeting, the County Archivist confirmed that the conservation work on the Bergh Apton tithe map had been completed.
- The list of publications on pages 46 and 47 of the report was a selection of the titles published during the last six months and was indicative of the amount of research carried out in the Norfolk Record Office. Members' attention was drawn to an article about *The Whirlpool of Misadventures. Letters of Robert Paston, First Earl of Yarmouth, 1663-79* which had appeared in the Eastern Daily Press on 23 November.
- To indicate the wide variety of research completed at the Norfolk Record Office, members requested a board displaying book covers be put on show in the Archive Centre showcasing the books by the authors who had completed their research at the Norfolk Record Office. The County Archivist said he would investigate the possibility, but thought that, due to possible copyright problems, a list of all publications could be provided instead.

- Norfolk Record Office did not have a copy of the accompanying DVD to the book by S Spooner entitled *Sail and Storm – The Aylsham Navigation*, although a copy of the book itself was available in Norfolk Record Office.
- The records from the Colman site remained unavailable in Norfolk, following their removal by Unilever to the Wirral when they took over the site. Unilever had also refused to allow the Norwich Society to digitise the records, although they had agreed to make an on-line catalogue available. NROCAT did have a catalogue of some of the records available, although anyone wishing to view the actual records would need to travel to Port Sunlight to do so.
- The Law Society had issued guidance about receiving archival material from solicitors such as the records received from White and Pomeroy, solicitors at Wymondham. The Principal Archivist had confirmed that the Norfolk Record Office was aware of the guidance, but the accessions from White and Pomeroy were from a very long time ago and were not likely to be covered under the guidance.
- The Norfolk Record Society was pleased to report that Professor A Hassell Smith of Norwich, who was a former member of the Committee, had donated all his research papers to them following his recent house move to Bristol.
- Members asked if scholars could be encouraged to donate their research materials to the Norfolk Record Office. The County Archivist said the Record office already held examples of such archives from academics and anyone wishing to deposit their materials could speak to the County Archivist for guidance.
- The Committee noted the extensive range of talks and lectures that had been given from 1 April to 30 September 2012.

8.4 **RESOLVED** to note the report.

9. **Exclusion of the Public**

9.1 The Committee was asked to consider excluding the public from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for consideration of the item below, on the grounds it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

9.2 The County Archivist presented the following conclusion of the public interest test:

The NRO bids at auctions and acquires by private treaty sales documents of relevance to Norfolk, which fit within its Collections Policy. The prices of documents are increasing all the time, particularly because dealers' attitudes are "to charge what the market will pay". If prices paid by the NRO for documents were to become generally known publicly, this will have the effect of inflating the market. Since public funds are involved in its purchases, the NRO operates a strict value for money policy and strives to pay no more than is necessary, while, at the same time, trying to ensure that no important documents are lost to Norfolk. Releasing information about prices paid for documents would have a significant detrimental impact on NCC's commercial revenue and might put documents out of the NRO's

financial reach, thereby losing part of the county's written heritage. It was therefore not in the public interest to release information about prices paid for document purchases.

RESOLVED

9.3 That the public be excluded from the following item.

10 Periodic Report: Appendix Manuscripts Purchased, 1 April – 30 September 2012

10.2 The annexed report (10) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report gave details of the documents purchased by the Norfolk Record Office during the period.

10.2 **RESOLVED** to note the report.

11. Future Meetings

Date	Time	Venue
Friday 11 January 2013	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 26 April 2013	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 28 June 2013	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 22 November 2013	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre

The meeting concluded at 11:35am.

Dr C Kemp, Vice-Chairman



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Kristen Jones on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.