

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 January 2012

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr J Joyce
Mrs J Leggett
Mr D Murphy (Chairman)

Breckland District Council

Mr P Duigan

Broadland District Council

Mr J Bracey

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Mrs M Coleman

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Mrs E Nockolds

North Norfolk District Council

Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds

Norwich City Council

Ms D Carlo
Mr M Sands

South Norfolk District Council

Dr C J Kemp

Non-Voting Members

Co-Opted Member

Mr M Begley
Prof C Rawcliffe

Representative of the Norfolk Record Society

Dr G A Metters

Representative of the Bishop of Norwich

Revd C Read

Observer

Dr V Morgan

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Jones (Mr Joyce substituting), Mr Rockcliffe (Mrs Leggett substituting), Ms V Thomas, Mr R Jewson, and Prof Wilson.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 November 2011 were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment below:

- Within the list of Members present, an amendment was needed which indicated that Mrs Nockolds represented King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.

3. Matters of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Norfolk Record Office – Performance and Budget Report, 2011/12

5.1 The annexed report (5) by the County Archivist was received. This report provided information on performance against service plans and forecast budget out-turn information for 2011/12 for the Norfolk Record Office (NRO). Members were asked to consider and comment on the performance with the 2011/12 service plans and on performance with the revenue budget and reserves and provisions for 2011/12.

5.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The County Archivist noted that there were two large collections of documents which might soon be purchased, depending on the outcomes of negotiations. If the negotiations were successful, it was likely that NRO funding would be required to match funding from external sources, thus using some of the balance in Reserves and Provisions at 2.3.1 of the report.
- In response to a question about water-damaged documents, the County Archivist confirmed that 96% of these documents had been conserved.
- In response to a question about training for Churchwardens, the County Archivist stated that information was available online as well.
- The County Archivist noted that the NRO website had recently been revamped. It was planned that the website would eventually be launched formally, but, for the time being, this was a 'soft launch' so that any potential glitches could be corrected beforehand.
- It was noted that at the table at 2.3.1 of the report, the column title "Reserves and Provisions 2010/11" should read "Reserves and Provisions 2011/12". In addition Members noted the reasons for the current levels of reserves and provisions as explained by the County Archivist.

RESOLVED

5.3 To note the performance with the 2011/12 service plans.

5.4 To note the performance with the revenue budget and reserves and provisions for 2011/12.

6. Norfolk Record Office – Service and Budget Planning 2012 to 2014

6.1 The annexed report (6) by the County Archivist was received. At its November meeting, the Norfolk Records Committee considered a report on proposals for service and financial planning for 2012-14. This report updated the Committee on further information and changes affecting proposals. It included confirmation of the Provisional Grant Settlement, updated information on revenue budget proposals and capital funding bids and the latest information on the cash limited budget for services relevant to this Panel.

Members were asked to consider and comment on:

- The revised service and financial planning context and assumptions;
- The revised spending pressures and savings for the Norfolk Record Office;

and

- The proposed list of new and amended capital schemes.

6.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Members questioned what efforts were being made to reduce energy consumption at the Norfolk Record Office given that The Archive Centre was a relatively modern building. The County Archivist responded that he was Chairman of the NRO's Budget and Efficiencies Board which, among other things, had looked at means of reducing the energy costs associated with The Archive Centre. This involved, for example, switching off corridor lights, but the building had been designed with thermal inertia which allowed the plant which controlled the specific atmospheric conditions required for archive storage to be switched off for a few hours overnight, thereby saving energy and expense. He stressed that this was a very fine balancing act, because conditions in the repository had to remain at a constant at all times.

RESOLVED

6.3 To agree:

- The revised service and financial planning context assumption;
- The revised spending pressures and savings for the NRO; and
- The proposed list of new and amended capital schemes.

7. Free Online Resource from the Norfolk Record Office

7.1 The annexed report (7) by the County Archivist was received. The report gave details of the NRO's provision of free online resources.

7.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The County Archivist noted that the NRO was about to begin Phase Two of the Norfolk Manorial Documents Register, which would be partly supported by funding from The National Archives (TNA). The NRO was also a participant in the East of England regional strand of a TNA-funded project to digitize school records.
- The County Archivist noted that while the digitalizing programme was progressing successfully, the NRO had noticed a slight decline in visitor numbers. He felt that this was partially to do with the current economic climate and the pressures faced by the general public and other archive centres around the country. He also felt that this decline related to the increase in the number of documents online. He noted that there was not an easy way to access data on the number of users for most of the online content, since most of this content was managed by external organisations.
- Members asked whether the Genealogical Society of Utah (GSU) was linked to the Mormon Church in the United States, as there had been some controversy in the past when the Mormon Church was using church records against the wishes of some communicants. The County Archivist noted that there had been a very small number of cases in the past, but that this was

not now an issue for most Norfolk parishes. He added that, in all cases where copying had taken place, the agreement of the parish had previously been obtained, as had the approval of the Diocese.

- The Chairman requested that Members of the Records Committee signed up to the current campaign, 'Say Yes' to better broadband in Norfolk. This campaign aimed to gain Government support and funding to invest in the broadband infrastructure in Norfolk. With better and faster broadband, more Norfolk residents would be able to access, and access more quickly, the online archives available to them through the NRO.

RESOLVED

7.3 To note the report.

8. Exclusion of the Public

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.

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 can stand". 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

To exclude the public for the following item.

9. Exempt Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Date and Time of Next Meeting and Future Meeting Dates

Members noted that the next meeting would take place at 10:30am on Friday 27 April 2012 in The Green Room, The Archive Centre. Future meeting dates and details were also noted:

Date	Time	Venue
Friday 22 June	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 23 November	10:30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre

The meeting concluded at 11:00am.

Mr D Murphy, Chairman



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