

# NORFOLK RECORDS COMMITTEE

Item No 8

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Archives Unlocked: A new vision for archives</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>30 June 2017</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe - Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> As one of the pre-eminent services in the country, the Norfolk Record Office (NRO) has the opportunity to play a significant role in shaping and delivering the work outlined in the new vision for archives. Many of the ambitions laid out in the visions and actions laid out in the work plan closely align with the NROs current work and plans. This is particularly true in the areas of digital preservation, engagement, discoverability, resilience, wellbeing and support for other groups engaged with archives.	

## Executive summary

In March the new vision for archives, Archives Unlocked, was launched. This report provides a summary of the two documents that make up this vision.

## 1. Proposal

Committee notes the contents of the report and supports Norfolk Record Office's continued involvement in the delivery of this vision.

## 2. Evidence

### Background

- 2.1 In April 2016 The National Archives (TNA) launched a consultation process aimed at developing a new vision for archives. This supersedes *Archives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the government policy on archives, published in 2009. The Norfolk Record Office helped develop this vision by taking part in a round table event, attending one of its expert panels and through its membership of the project reference group.

On 29 March this new vision for archives, Archives Unlocked, was launched by the Minister of State for Digital and Culture. It consists of two documents:

*Archives Unlocked: Releasing the Potential.* This lays out the drivers for change, three ambitions for the benefits which archives can deliver and a series of 'think-pieces'.

*Archives Unlocked: Delivering the Vision.* This sets out an action plan for delivering the vision.

This report summarises both of these documents, quoting from them directly for sections of the report.

### ARCHIVES UNLOCKED: RELEASING THE POTENTIAL

#### Introduction

- 2.2 The document begins with a statement of the significance of archives.

‘Imagine a world without archives. Without records, we could not prove where and when we were born, or who owns the property we live in.

We could not trace our ancestry, explore our collective and individual identities, or challenge established views of the past. Without this collective memory – the evidence store for our histories - we could not hold governments and organisations to account. The impact of archives is felt across society: inspiring art and literature, enabling insightful and pioneering research; and informing decision-making in organisations of all types.

In short: Archives matter.’

### **Drivers for Change**

2.3 Three drivers for change are identified:

i. ‘Confidence in data and information

People need to have confidence in the integrity of institutions. Organisations need to be open and transparent, and high profile enquiries into the history and culture of public, corporate and charitable bodies have highlighted the evidential value of records

ii. Technological change

Digital technology has fundamentally changed what it means to be an archive. Archivists can help the IT and knowledge management communities by bringing professional archival practice to this digital world.

iii. User expectations

Society is changing, opening up new uses for data and records, and posing new questions about what is collected now and in the future, in both paper-based documents and digital formats.’

### **Ambitions**

2.4 Three ambitions for the benefits which archives will deliver sit at the heart of the vision:

2.5 **‘Trust: People and institutions trust in the authenticity of archive records, and how they are preserved and presented.**

i. Democracy and society are strengthened by scrutiny of the archival records, holding institutions and individuals to account.

ii. Archive users have confidence in the integrity and authenticity of records and in the professionals who support their research.

iii. Services embrace the opportunities of technological change, ensuring confidence in both digital and physical records.’

2.6 The section includes a case study and a think-piece relating to digital archives. These look at ‘protecting our digital memory’, affirming that ‘never before in human history have we been at risk of losing so much knowledge in one go’; and stressing the importance of collaborative action and continuous development of skills and archival practice. A further case study looks at the importance of archives in the Hillsborough investigation; whilst a think-piece addresses the

increasing importance of metadata, affirming 'Nothing is accessible without indexes and catalogues, and in the future we will value them as much as the archived object.'

2.7 **'Enrichment': Archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically**

- 2.8
- i. Our culture of knowledge and learning expands through new ways to discover and use archive material.
  - ii. Value in businesses grows through the use of archive material to support change, innovation and efficiency.
  - iii. People's lives are enhanced through their engagement with archive collections.'

2.9 This section includes a case study highlighting the importance of Barnardo's Archive for both the individual concerned and for improving the way we support and protect children today. It also contains a think-piece from the Director of the What Works Centre for Wellbeing addressing the issue 'Are archives good for our wellbeing?' This looks at the relevance of archives to the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (think, give, connect, take notice and be active), particularly in an aging population.

2.10 **Openness: Archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge, and are accessible to all.**

- 2.11
- i. Archives deliver an excellent user experience, enabling people to find, access and interpret records, whether digital or physical.
  - ii. The rich diversity of society is reflected in our archives' collections, users and workers.
  - iii. Archives are networked globally to maintain excellent practice and open new possibilities for institutions and users.

2.12 This includes a case study from Archives+ in Manchester looking at ways in which it has worked with local communities and a think-piece on archiving 'journeys to belonging'. The latter stresses the need for active and pro-active support from established archives to others groups in order to address the major archival challenges in collecting, evaluating, conserving, interpreting and making records and archival materials accessible and available.

**ARCHIVES UNLOCKED: DELIVERING THE VISION**

2.13 Accompanying the above document is an action plan. This presents three phases of delivery alongside a more detailed plan for the next two years.

**Themes**

2.14 The three themes which the plan focuses on are:

- i. **Digital Capacity:** This will develop the digital capacity of the archives sector, to preserve digital records, and increase discoverability of the paper and digital archives.
- ii. **Resilience:** This will build the sector's resilience to ensure more archives can meet and sustain the Archive Service Accreditation standard, open the sector to new skills and a more diverse workforce, increase income generation capacities and support innovative service models. (Note: The

report highlights the work of the NRO in its 'entrepreneurial approach to generating more income.')

- iii. **Impact:** This will demonstrate the impact of archives by developing and expanding audiences, piloting approaches to using data and evidence, and influencing thinking in the IT, commercial and knowledge sectors.

### **Phases and Two Year Plan**

- 2.15 Three phases for the Plan are envisaged - Phase 1: Building the Platform,; Phase 2: Developing Capacity and Phase 3: Shaping the Future.
- 2.16 The two year plan includes numerous actions under each of the three themes. Some of the items which are of particular relevance to the NRO are:
- Scope a digital capacity building programme for the sector to address digital preservation, discoverability and digitisation.
  - Foster expertise and shared solutions through a learning asset of local and regional digital preservation projects.
  - Increase access to archives through innovation in online catalogues, data collation, analysis and reuse.
  - Scope comprehensive workforce development strategy
  - Develop digital skills in the archive workforce
  - Support entrepreneurial approaches to income generation
  - Foster partnerships of archive services to deliver strategic development
  - Develop a framework for evaluation impact and value of digital access to collections
  - Influence the debate within the IT and digital community about the importance of archival processes to the management of digital records.

## **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 For the NRO to improve its service and efficiency it is essential that it work in partnership. One of its key partners is The National Archives who provide a lead for the sector in England.
- 3.2 Many of the areas of work in which the NRO is engaged fit closely with Archives Unlocked and its ambitions. These include;
- Digital preservation work
  - Wellbeing orientated projects
  - Supporting local groups to work with archives
  - Improving the discoverability of the collection
  - Increasing income generation

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications to take into consideration.

## **5. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 5.1 Officers have considered all the implications of which members should be aware. Apart from those listed in the report above, there are no other implications to take into account.

## Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or would like to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

**Officer Name:** Gary Tuson      **Tel No:** 01603 222599

**Email address:** [gary.tuson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:gary.tuson@norfolk.gov.uk)



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