

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2013

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr P Duigan (Vice-Chairman)
Mr T Wright

Breckland District Council

Mrs S Matthews

Broadland District Council

Mr D Ward

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Mrs E Nockolds

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Ms K Robinson-Payne

North Norfolk District Council

Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds

Norwich City Council

Ms D Carlo
Ms V Thomas

South Norfolk District Council

Dr C J Kemp (Chairman)

Non-Voting Members

Co-Opted Member

Mr M Begley
Dr G A Metters

Observer

Dr V Morgan

Non-voting Cabinet Member

Mr B Stone Cultural Services, Customer Service and Communications

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Bracey and Mr R Jewson.

2. Election of Chairman

2.1 Dr Kemp was elected Chairman of the Committee.

Dr Kemp in the Chair.

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

3.1 Mr Duigan was elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

4. Minutes

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2012 were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

- At 6.3, bullet point 3, change "on line" to "on-line".
- At 8.3, bullet point 11, the first sentence should end, "...when they took over the Colman site."

5. Matters of Urgent Business – Dr John Alban’s retirement from his role of County Archivist

5.1 Since the despatch of the agenda papers Members of the Joint Committee had received notice that Dr Alban planned to retire on 31 March 2013 and therefore this meeting would be his last Norfolk Records Committee meeting.

5.2 A press release would be made public that afternoon. This press release is attached at [Appendix A](#).

5.3 Members present made the following tributes to Dr Alban:

- The Cabinet Member for Cultural Services stated that Dr Alban had raised the standards for record offices around the country and he noted that the Norfolk Record Office was the best outside London. He expressed his great thanks for Dr Alban’s many years of service.
- Mr Duigan noted that he had been on the Joint Records Committee for 14 years – two years fewer than Dr Alban had been the County Archivist. He noted that when he joined it was a challenging, but productive time for Dr Alban as it was shortly after the fire in the previous record office building. He noted that Dr Alban was responsible for the amazing building the committee met in today and his sterling work had resulted in this outcome.
- Prof. Wilson noted that he had been on the interviewing panel which selected Dr Alban for his post. He noted Dr Alban’s utter professionalism in carrying out his role. He also thanked Dr Alban for the tremendous achievement which resulted in the current building which housed the Norfolk Record Office. He said Dr Alban should be enormously proud of his achievements and wished him a long and happy retirement.
- Mrs Nockolds thanked Dr Alban for his work, in particular her gratitude for the work carried out with King’s Lynn Borough Archives and the support they had received from him and his staff.
- Dr Morgan stated the Dr Alban had turned the tragedy of the fire disaster into an opportunity that would benefit Norfolk for many years and had created a healthy working atmosphere for the Norfolk Record Office staff. He noted that Dr Alban had gone beyond his day job to engage with many other groups and County Archivists around the region and the country, and had latched onto opportunities to work with other organisations such as the University of East Anglia.
- Ms Carlo spoke on behalf of the City of Norwich and its records and said that Dr Alban could retire feeling extremely proud of his achievements and there was great sadness to see him retire.
- Dr Metters said that on behalf of the Norfolk Record Society he was very grateful and their relationship with the Norfolk Record Office had been mutually supportive.
- Ms Thomas thanked Dr Alban for his helpfulness and introduction to the work of the Norfolk Record Office.

5.4 The County Archivist responded to the tributes:

- He thanked Members individually and the Committee as a whole for their unfailing support for his work. He said that the successes of the Norfolk Record Office were in very large part due to this support.
- He noted that he had hoped to follow the example of Miss Kennedy, the previous County Archivist, and work well beyond the retirement age but he had been unwell since the summer. He would retire on 31 March 2013, exactly 16 years to the day since he took on the role. By leaving at this time it would also enable him to complete a number of projects and fulfil a number of commitments which ran until that date.
- He invited Members to the launch of the exhibition for the 50th Anniversary of the Record Office. This would take place at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, 30 January 2013 in the Long Gallery in The Archive Centre. He felt this would be a fitting celebration and hoped all Members would be able to attend.
- He expressed his immense gratitude to the Norfolk Record Office staff over the past 16 years for their unfailing support and absolute loyalty. Their hard work had brought the Norfolk Record Office to the standard at which it operated today. He said he was leaving with some regrets, but also with great pride in all which the Record Office had achieved, and he deemed it a huge honour to have had the opportunity to serve the communities and people of Norfolk in this post.

6. Declarations of Interest

6.1 There were no declarations of interest.

7. Norfolk Records Urgent Business Sub-Committee

7.1 The annexed report (7) by the County Archivist was received. The report asked the Committee to appoint a County Councillor to fill the Norfolk County Council vacancy and a District Councillor to fill a district council vacancy on the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee would exercise all the powers of the main Committee in dealing with matters which are urgent (having been agreed as such by the Head of Democratic Services and the Chief Officer(s) concerned) and which fall, partly or wholly, within the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

RESOLVED

7.2 To appoint Dr Kemp and Mr Duigan to serve on the Urgent Business Sub-Committee (and to join the current serving Members on the sub-committee, Mr Wright and Mrs Nockolds).

8. Norfolk Record Office - Performance and Budget Report 2012/13

8.1 The annexed report (8) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report provided information on performance against service plans and budget out-turn information for 2012/13 for the Norfolk Record Office (NRO). The report covered both service performance and financial performance.

8.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Cultural Services Accountant stated that at the end of November 2012, the NRO was predicting a break-even revenue budget outturn.
- The Cultural Services Accountant stated that performance indicators showed that during the year the NRO had continued to increase its range of audience participation, with numbers slightly up compared with the same period in 2011/12.
- The Cultural Services Accountant stated that performance against the 2012/13 service plan had been good.
- In response to a question regarding Great Yarmouth Microfilming the County Archivist explained that sets of microfilms were available in some libraries, but not all. The Assistant Director of Community Services (Cultural Services and Head of Libraries and Information) stated that storage of these was an issue at libraries and the sensible next step would be to digitise these. New technology was being investigated for Great Yarmouth library and it was hoped that new reader equipment would be purchased soon.
- It was suggested that libraries may not be the most appropriate venues to store microfilms and some towns in Norfolk had history or heritage centres which may be able to provide this service. The County Archivist agreed and said that the NRO was always willing to sell duplicate microfilms to interested groups who requested them.

RESOLVED

8.3 To note performance with the 2012/13 service plan

8.4 To note performance with revenue budget and reserves and provisions for 2012/13.

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

9.1 The annexed report (9) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. This report updated the Committee on further information and changes affecting proposals since the Norfolk Records Committee considered a report at its November meeting on proposals for service and financial planning for 2013-14. It included an update from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and confirmation of the Provisional Finance Settlement, updated information on revenue budget proposals and capital funding bids and the latest information on the cash limited budget for the services relevant to this Committee.

9.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- The Cultural Services Accountant stated that the cash limited budget stood at £1.547m.
- The County Archivist noted that the Corporate Freedom of Information and Data Protection budget of £151,000 would be transferred to an Information Management Shared Service. In addition, departmental budgets would be top-sliced to contribute to this shared service. This would mean a £6,800 reduction in the Cultural Services' budget, to which the NRO would

contribute *pro rata*.

- It was noted that in relation to 4.3.1 in the report, the meeting date to be scheduled with representatives of the business sector was not yet known. A verbal update will be provided to Cabinet on 28 January 2013.
- In response to a question regarding savings of £45,000 made by reduced staffing in Record Office, it was noted that this approximated to two full-time equivalent (FTE) posts.
- The County Archivist commented that when The Archive Centre was planned, the repository had been designed with fifteen years' accrual space. The Record Office had taken advantage of this to earn income by renting out some space for document storage. However, as space filled up, the opportunity to make income from this service would obviously diminish over time.
- The point was raised that there were still schools in Norfolk which were not aware of the opportunity to place records in The Archive Centre's repository. The County Archivist informed the Committee that this information was available on the Norfolk County Council Schools website and that within the Record Office there was a staff member responsible for Local Authority records and who worked with schools. He found it surprising that there were schools which were not aware of this service.

RESOLVED

9.3 To note the provisional finance settlement for 2013-14.

9.4 To note the updated information on spending pressures and savings for the Norfolk Record Office and the cash limited budget for 2013-14.

9.5 To note the proposed list of new and amended capital schemes.

10. Review of Norfolk Record Office's Standards and Policies

10.1 The annexed report (10) by the County Archivist was received by the Committee. The report explained that the Norfolk Record Office reviewed its standards and policies from time to time and brought them before the Norfolk Records Committee for consideration. The report recommended that the revised versions of the standards and policy documents at Appendices 1-5 should be adopted and be subject to further review within five years.

10.2 During the discussion following points were noted:

- The County Archivist noted that most of the changes to the document were simply updates or tightening up on the wording. He also stated that the changes had been indicated using the 'track changes' facility so that Members could see where variations had been made from the original document.
- It was noted that the Race Relations Act 2010 had been superseded by a new piece of legislation and therefore this should be updated in the document.

- Within Appendix 1 at bullet point 8, it was agreed to change the term “mostly” to “most orders”.
- In response to a Member question, the County Archivist noted that some deposits required special terms before the deposit was made. For example, a depositor might request that access be restricted until after a certain date (e.g. 100 years) in the future.
- Within Appendix 3, paragraph 13, a question was asked what the policy was of the NRO when they wished to destroy or transfer deposited records to another repository, but the owner of the records was unknown, and whether the Record Office had a policy for large-scale deaccessioning. The County Archivist noted that the first part of the question related to what was an extremely rare occurrence, but if such a circumstance were to arise, the Record Office would exercise its judgement with due diligence, acting as if *in loco parentis*. He added that the Record Office did not have a policy for large-scale deaccessioning.
- The County Archivist confirmed that the NRO kept a record of any damage to records. While there was no formal requirement to do this, it was best practice.

RESOLVED

10.3 To adopt the amended versions of the standards and policies at Appendixes 1-5 subject to the following amendments:

- The legislation which superseded the Race Relations Act 2010 be referred to in the document;
- The term “mostly” be replaced with “most orders”; and
- The paragraphs are numbered rather than bullet pointed.

10.4 That the revised standards and policies at Appendixes 1-5 be subject to further reviews, at intervals of no longer than five years.

11. Exclusion of the Public

11.1 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.

11.2 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

11.3 That the public be excluded from the following item.

12. Exempt Minutes

12.1 The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13. Chairman's Announcements

13.1 The Chairman wished to thank Mr Murphy for his contributions to the Norfolk Records Committee during his time as Chairman. He noted that as a practising historian and author, Mr Murphy had made a great contribution to the work of Committee and the NRO.

14. Future Meetings

Date	Time	Venue
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 11:25am.

Dr C Kemp, Chairman



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For Immediate Release

11 January 2013

Norfolk's County Archivist set to retire

The meeting of the Norfolk Records Committee on Friday, 11 January will be Dr John Alban's last as Norfolk County Archivist after he has announced he is set to retire from the role.

Dr Alban will step down on 31 March, exactly 16 years to the day since he was appointed to the County Archivist's post.

Upon his appointment in 1997, Dr Alban was given the responsibilities of modernising the Norfolk Record Office (NRO) and taking the lead on the project to provide Norfolk with a new archive facility.

The Archive Centre Project was a joint collaboration between Norfolk County Council and the University of East Anglia, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It resulted in the construction of a state-of-the-art facility, The Archive Centre, which opened to the public in 2003 on the County Hall site in Norwich and houses the Record Office. It was then officially opened by Her Majesty the Queen in 2004.

His period in post has seen the NRO develop into an institution which is universally acclaimed as a leader in its field and has been recognised by The National Archives as a four-star service.

It was the first county record office to have its collections designated in their entirety as being of outstanding international importance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2005. The medieval records of the Norwich Great Hospital held by the NRO were granted UNESCO status in 2011 and have been inscribed into the UK Memory of the World Register, which exists to promote documentary heritage of local significance.

Dr Alban took over following twenty-three years as City Archivist in his home town of Swansea and during his tenure in Norfolk the Record Office has developed a reputation for raising funds to help save local archives that are under threat of being lost to the public.

One example of this was when Dr Alban persuaded Swansea City Football Club's mascot, Cyril the Swan, to lend his mute support to the Norfolk Record Office's successful campaign to rescue the 'Broadland swan roll' from export to the USA in 1999. This 15th-century parchment shows 99 outline drawings of swans' heads, showing marks of ownership and owners' names.

Dr Alban said: "In many ways, the County Archivist's post has been my dream job. Norfolk's archives are unrivalled in their extent and quality, and although archivists



should display a certain professional detachment, for me it has never ceased to be an enormous personal thrill being in charge of such exceptional collections.

“That and having had the responsibility for what has been described as one of Europe’s finest archive buildings provided me with professional opportunities which few county archivists have enjoyed, and for this I count myself highly privileged and singularly fortunate.

“I am deeply honoured that I was given the opportunity to serve the people and communities of Norfolk in this office and I shall leave it with some regret, although tempered with pride in all which the Record Office staff have achieved, with the unfailing support of Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Records Committee, over the last decade and a half.

“Leaving at the end of this financial year is appropriate in many ways. I have a number of outstanding, long-term commitments up to the end of March, which I feel duty-bound to fulfil. Some of these are connected with the 50th Anniversary of the Norfolk Record Office, which falls in 2013, a date which also marks the tenth year of our operation in The Archive Centre.

“Retiring on 31 March also means that I shall have held the post of County Archivist of Norfolk for exactly sixteen years to the day.”

Barry Stone, Cabinet Member for Cultural Services at Norfolk County Council, said: “I want to thank John for the clear dedication and passion he has brought to the role of County Archivist. He has been a huge asset to the Norfolk Record Office over the last 16 years and it’s testament to the work that he and his team have done in this time that the Record Office and the county’s archives are so well-regarded at both a local and national level.

“John will be very much missed, but I prefer to see it that we were lucky to have someone of his calibre and capability in the role for as long as we have. On behalf of all involved in running the Norfolk Record Office in The Archive Centre, I would like to wish him the very best for his retirement.”

After his retirement, Dr Alban intends to keep up his strong personal interest in the history of medieval Norfolk and East Anglia. A respected historian in his own right, with some 130 publications to his name over the past 40 years, and an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the School of History at the University of East Anglia, he will now devote more time to historical research, especially into Norfolk’s role during the Hundred Years’ War.

For more information about the Norfolk Record Office and The Archive Centre, visit www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk.

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For political comment

Cllr Barry Stone (Cons) Cabinet member for Cultural Services, Communications and Customer Service on 01493 603900 or 07760 166344

Cllr Mike Brindle, (Liberal Democrat) on 01842 753566
Cllr Marcus Hemsley (Green) on 07827 282430
Cllr George Nobbs (Lab) on 01603 611406

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