

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 May 2009

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr C B A Lloyd Owen (Chairman)

Mr J R Shrimplin

Breckland District Council

Mr P J Duigan

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Mrs M Coleman

Norwich City Council

Mr R Blower

Mr S Jeraj

Ms R Makoff

North Norfolk District Council

Mrs V R Gay

South Norfolk District Council

Mr C J Kemp

Non-Voting Members

Co-Opted Member

Mr M R Begley

Observer

Dr V Morgan

Representative of the Bishop of Norwich

Revd Charles Read

Representative of the Norfolk Record Society

Dr G A Metters

County Councillors Also Present:

Mr J Gretton

Mrs I Floering Blackman

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J W Bracey, Mrs E A Nockolds, Mr M Taylor, Mr R Jewson, Professor C Rawcliffe, and Professor R Wilson.

1 Miss Jean Kennedy, MBE, MA

The Committee stood in silent tribute to the memory of Miss Jean Kennedy, the former County Archivist, who had died in January 2009. Jean would be sadly missed by everyone who knew her.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2009 were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman subject to the words (at page 4) "receiving accessions" being replaced by the words "delivering requests".

3 Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Annual Governance Statement 2008/09 and Value for Money

The annexed report (5) by the Chief Internal Auditor was received. The report introduced the Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 and explained that the statement would report on whether the governance framework for the Norfolk Record Office was adequate and effective. The report also explained the new requirement for an assessment of the Audit Commission's Value for Money conclusion.

The Committee noted and approved the following:

- (a) The requirement for an Annual Governance Statement and an annual review.
- (b) The County Council's (and therefore the Records Committee's) Code of Corporate Governance would be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer.
- (c) "Key" partnerships would be included in the annual review.
- (d) The Chief Officer would take corporate ownership of the governance requirements.
- (e) The Annual Governance Statement would be included within the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- (f) The new requirement for the Value for Money conclusion would be considered along with the Annual Governance Statement and reported to the Norfolk Records Committee on Friday 26 June 2009.

6 Norfolk Record Office Budget Monitoring Report

The annexed report (6) by the County Archivist was received and presented by John Perrott (Finance and Business Support Manager). The report provided the Committee with a progress report on the Norfolk Record Office (NRO) revenue and capital budgets and reserves and provisions for 2008/09. The Finance and Business Support Manager explained that a break-even budget was expected with the budget shortfall being met by NRO savings together with a transfer of funds from Cultural Services relating to support services.

During discussion the following key points were noted:

- Expenditure on Freedom of Information and Data Protection issues remained at a break-even position.
- There had been a significant increase in energy costs throughout the year and this remained an issue of some concern.
- Good progress continued to be made with post-Fire conservation work. Some 91% of this work had now been completed.
- The NRO was likely to use some of the IT reserve of £34,000 during the current financial year.

Resolved –

That the Committee note the NRO's expected revenue out-turn for 2008/09 and progress with reserves and provisions.

7 Annual Review of Charges for Services

The Committee received the annexed report (7) by the County Archivist, which reported the annual review of NRO charges. These were reviewed annually to ensure that they kept pace with inflation.

During discussion the following key points were noted:

- The NRO was expected to comply with the measure of inflation that was used by the County Council. This called for a minimum average inflationary increase in Record Office charges of 2%.
- The County Archivist explained that certain charges which, if increased, would be detrimental to the NRO and its users, were pegged at a certain rate, while others were raised higher than 2% to compensate for this.
- The revised charges would allow the NRO to provide a value for money service.
- By giving the County Archivist the discretion to charge film, television and video companies a variable facility fee, he was able to have some influence on NRO exposure to these types of media. This had worked well in the past, for example, where BBC Look East filmed the Miniature Windows on the World exhibition and conducted an interview with the County Archivist about it. This had been shown several times and had been cited by many visitors to the Long Gallery as the reason for their visit.

Resolved –

That the Committee approves the proposed changes to charges outlined in the report.

8 Risk Register

The Committee received the annexed report (8) by the County Archivist, which asked Members to comment on the latest version of the NRO risk register.

During discussion the following key points were noted:

- The NRO relied on Charles House Services for IT services and, like other services, sometimes had to wait their turn because Charles House Services provided IT services for all departments at the County Hall site.
- The County Archivist gave some examples of the ways in which the NRO and its services could help to support people at a time of economic recession.
- Members strongly felt that if the impending review of Local Government in Norfolk resulted in more than one unitary authority, the best solution for archives was to retain a joint service, as at present, and one which was

democratically accountable via a joint Records Committee which continued to operate across any new decision-making authorities for Norfolk. In this way, the NRO would be able to maintain its high reputation as one of the best local authority archive services in the country and continue to deliver a high quality service for the people of Norfolk.

Resolved –

That the Committee notes the NRO's risk register as revised by the NRO Management Team on 12 March 2009.

9 Norfolk Record Office Service Plan 2009-12

The Committee received the annexed report (9) by the County Archivist, which sought its views on the development of the NRO's Service Plan for 2009-12. The report brought together all of the key service developments, which were planned by the NRO for the next three years.

During the course of discussion the following key points were noted:

- The NRO website had been developed in 1997, and its content was one of the best in the country, but its overall appearance was in need of some improvement. A project to maintain and develop the online presence of the NRO was currently out to tender; the Committee would be kept informed of developments.
- During the period of the Service Plan, preparation of documents for microfilming would result in several thousand more items being available to users as copies, thus helping to preserve the originals. The digitisation of documents would continue as a separate process.
- The County Archivist said that he would be happy to attend by invitation appropriate meetings of the District Councils to explain the work of the NRO. This could be in addition to inviting District Council Members to take part in the induction process for new Members of the County Council, following the County Council elections in June 2009. The induction training session about the work of the NRO would be held at County Hall on 24 July 2009 at 10.30 am.
- The NRO was investigating the possibility of entering into a partnership project on rural education; if the project were deemed viable, the NRO would collaborate in a bid to the HLF and look to make an "in kind" contribution to the project.

Resolved –

To note the key activities within the NRO Service Plan 2009-12.

10 Periodic Report by the County Archivist for the Period 1 November 2008 to 31 March 2009

The Committee received the annexed report (10) by the County Archivist.

The County Archivist highlighted the following points:

- During stock taking fortnight, 395 or about 10% of the rolled cartoons from the G King and Son Ltd stained glass archive were cleaned. A Project Archivist was due to start work on the collection very shortly.
- It was pointed out that if a Member wanted to take up an issue of study space at the Forum then this should be done with the Director of Cultural Services after the meeting.
- Three PCs for public access to the Norfolk Sound Archive had been delivered to the Listening Room.
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council had set up a Working Group to look into the feasibility of recommendations for a new museum and improved archive facility at the Town Hall complex, while maintaining civic functions.
- Five new information leaflets had appeared, all related to school records and education in Norfolk. All the information leaflets were available on the NRO website, as were the newsletters and annual reports.
- The exhibition showcased in the Long Gallery entitled *Miniature Windows on the World* had proved exceptionally popular, attracting an average of 140 additional visitors a week to The Archive Centre.
- The NRO, together with other parts of Cultural Services, were engaged in a Norfolk "Singing Histories" project. This was part of a national project, and Norfolk would be producing the booklet for the eastern region, containing a collection of Norfolk songs. It was hoped to have copies of the booklet available at the Norfolk Show later in the year.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

11 Annual Report 2008-09

The Committee received the annexed report (11) by the County Archivist, which provided an overview of activity during the year.

Resolved –

That the report be approved and 1,500 copies published in newsletter format, with additional features and illustrations.

12 Exclusion of the Public

The Committee noted the following reasoning for the exclusion of the public and the conclusion in respect 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. (Also, persons who might otherwise have donated or deposited documents might feel encouraged to charge for them). 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 from the following item.

13 Report by the County Archivist for the period 1 November 2008 to 31 March 2009 – Manuscripts Purchased

The Committee noted an Appendix to the Periodic Report, which listed six accessions that had been acquired by purchase during the period.

Resolved –

To note the report.

14 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved –

That the next meeting of the Records Committee be held at 10.30 am on Friday 26 June 2009 in the Colman Room at County Hall.

15 To Answer Formal Questions (If Any) of Which Due Notice Has Been Given

There were no other formal questions.

16 Mr Christopher Lloyd Owen

Members paid tribute to the work of Mr Christopher Lloyd Owen who was not standing for re-election to the County Council and would therefore be retiring from the Records Committee in June 2009. Mr Lloyd Owen had been Chairman since being appointed to the Committee in July 2001, and had made a significant contribution to the Committee's many achievements, particularly with work leading to the successful opening of The Archive Centre, and the NRO becoming the first county record office to have all its collections Designated as being of outstanding importance by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. In reply, Mr Lloyd Owen said that he had enjoyed being a Member of the Records Committee and looked forward to hearing of its continued achievements.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and ended at 12.45pm

Chairman



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