

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 April 2023 at 10.30 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh (Chair)

Cllr A Birmingham

Cllr P Duigan

Borough Council of King's Lynn and

West Norfolk

Cllr E Nockolds

Norwich City Council

Cllr B Price

North Norfolk District Council

Cllr V Gay

Broadland District Council

Cllr G Nurden

Breckland District Council

Cllr R Kybird (Vice-Chair)

Non-Voting Members

Representative of the Bishop of

Norwich

Rev'd C Read

Representative of the Norfolk Record Society

Dr G A Metters

Observer

Dr V Morgan

1A Opening remarks by the Chair --Former County Councillor Barry Duffin

The Chair asked Members of the Committee to hold a minute's silence, for the sad passing of Barry Duffin, Councillor for West Depwade, who died on Easter Sunday following an accident. Barry was an active member of the Records Committee. He also served on the Joint Museums Committee, Norse and other Committees and had recently been appointed Vice Chair of Corporate Select Committee. Known for his hard work and commitment Barry was respected and liked by colleagues across the wide political spectrum; he would be missed.

1B To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton, Cllr V Thomas, Cllr M Jeal, Lady Dannatt, Cllr M Jeal, Prof. C Rawcliffe and Mr A Steynor.

2 Minutes

- 2.1** The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1** The Chair declared an "other interest" as a trustee of NORAH (Norfolk Archives and Heritage Development Foundation).

4 Finance and Risk

4.1 The Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Record Office revenue budget for 2022/23, capital programme and reserves and provisions and an update on the service risk register.

4.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The Record Office was currently forecast to achieve a balanced budget position.
- The Risk Register contained six key risks: one had a red risk rating, four amber and one green. The red rated risk (RM13959) related to a loss or reduction of funding, including that from income generation which accounted for around 30% of the service's funding. Measures have been introduced ensure that this income generation was maintained and, where possible, increased.
- Reserves and provisions were as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.
- In reply to questions, it was pointed out that the Norfolk Record Office had comparatively high levels of income generation and the potential to generate additional income was limited.

4.3 The Committee **CONSIDERED** and **COMMENTED** on:

- 1. Forecast position of the revenue budget, reserves, and provisions.**
- 2. Management of risk for 2022/23.**

5 Performance Report

5.1 The Committee received a report by the County Archivist that outlined delivery of Norfolk Record Office (NRO) services and improvements made between 1 October 2022 and 10 March 2023.

5.2 The following points were discussed and noted:

- The County Archivist explained the wide range of work that continued to be done to make the Norfolk Record Office more accessible to new audiences.
- It was pointed out that staff had started working with men from HMP Norwich on the Norfolk iteration of the Change Minds project. There were many additional aspects to the running of a project of this kind in a prison setting.
- Other activities had included staff putting on the first in-person Deciphering Old Handwriting course since lockdown, which began in January. Ten people signed up to the course.
- Staff had also provided training to volunteers on several projects. These include 4 training sessions for volunteers on the Mile Cross 100 project, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Britain's oldest purpose-built social housing estate.
- A Councillor highlighted the support that volunteers provided to the Record Office in the King's Lynn area and the work being done to encourage more volunteers to come forward to help support all the heritage sites in King's Lynn.
- The County Archivist reminded Members that at the previous meeting they had received a report on public access to the service which included a proposal to reduce opening hours by closing the searchroom on a Friday and part-compensating for this by opening half an hour earlier (at 9.30) on

Tuesday to Thursday. The County Archivist said that many of the NRO's regular users had expressed concern about these changes, in particular the impact it would have on those wanting to spend an extended period using the NRO. Whilst the NRO still needed to deliver the budget savings it had started a six-month trial to see if it could meet the concerns of its users. During this trial, the NRO would open from 10am to 4pm on Fridays for users who had pre-ordered documents. Microfilms would not be available on the day but would be accessible at the Norfolk Heritage Centre. In reply to questions, the County Archivist said that during the trial the demand for documents would be closely observed to see if the number of documents that could be requested should be increased. Members welcomed the start of the trial and asked to be kept informed of developments at their next meeting.

5.3 The Committee CONSIDERED and COMMENTED on the contents of the report and the actions taken by the Record Office to provide a service during the period between 1 October 2023 and 10 March 2023.

6. Storage Project Options Appraisal

6.1 The Committee received a report that considered an options appraisal of the potential solutions to issues surrounding storage of the NRO's growing collection, long-term preservation of documents and public access. The Committee assessed a list of potential solutions against a defined set of benefits which the project aimed to deliver.

6.2 After carefully considering the available options, the Committee was of the unanimous opinion that Option 4 (Build an Extension to Existing NRO Storage Based on Passive Principles) was the preferred solution. This option envisaged an extension to the existing Record Office constructed with high thermal inertia and high air tightness along with minimal intervention in the internal environment and assumed that only paper archives would be stored in it. Another key component of this option's success was the role of the Collection which itself acted as a buffer; therefore, the store needed to be filled with fully packaged archives. This option provided the required internal environments with a much lower carbon impact than the use of air conditioning.

6.3 The next step in the appraisal process was for the County Archivist to consider potential funding options and report back on this aspect of the project to a future meeting. It was noted that a Record Office extension would be outside the scope of lottery funding.

6.4 The Committee CONSIDERED and COMMENTED on the contents of the report and on a show of hands unanimously supported taking forward the recommended option 4 as set out above.

7 Future Meetings

7.1 The dates of future meetings were noted:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| 28 July 2023 | 10.30 am |
| 27 October 2023 | 10.30 am |
| 2 February 2024 | 10.30 am |

19 April 2024

10.30 am

8 Chairman's concluding remarks

- 8.1** The Chair placed on record thanks to those members who were not standing for re-election in the forthcoming District Council elections (including Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds and Cllr Virginia Gay who were long serving Members of the Committee).

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

Cllr Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh, Chair of the Committee



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