

Norfolk Records Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 January 2014

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Michael Chenery of Horsbrugh
Mr P Smyth

Broadland District Council

Mr J Bracey

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Mrs E Nockolds

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Mrs Robinson-Payne

Norwich City Council

Ms D Carlo
Mr D Bradford

South Norfolk District Council

Dr C J Kemp

Breckland Council

Mr R Kybird

Non-Voting Members

Co-Opted Member

Mr M Begley
Professor R Wilson

Observer

Dr V Morgan

Representative of the Norfolk Record Society

Dr G A Metters

Representative of the Bishop of Norwich

Revd C Read

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Wilkinson, Mr R Jewson, Mrs A Claussen-Reynolds, Ms D Gihawi, Ms V Thomas and Professor C Rawcliffe

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2013 were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:-

Item 3.1 – it was noted that Professor Hassell Smith had died in August, not September.

Item 1 - Mr Smyth noted that he had not been present at the last meeting but that he had not sent apologies.

3. Matters of Urgent Business

- 3.1 The Chairman advised that the Principal Archivist had retired at the end of 2013. He asked Members that if they wished to make a contribution towards a leaving gift, they do so by the end of January 2014 at which point a cheque would be sent. Members AGREED that they were happy with this suggestion.

4. Members to Declare any Interests

4.1 No interests were raised.

5. Norfolk Record Office Finance and Risk Report 2013/14..

5.1 The Finance and Risk report 2013/14 (item 5) by the County Archivist was received. This provided information on performance against budget and risk for 2013/14 as at 31 October 2013.

5.2 During the discussion the following points were noted:-

- Officers advised that the budget was predicted to break-even. This included movements to and from reserves. Savings had been delivered with regard to salaries but there had been additional costs for materials. Savings from the third year of the Big Conversation had been met.
- In relation to capital, some slippage from 2013-14 had occurred in order to cover costs.
- £93k would be removed from reserves in order to meet various projects throughout the year.
- Three risks had been identified on the risk register; loss of or reduction of funding, a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities and long term staff shortage. Members noted that it would be impossible to completely mitigate against staff shortage and asked if the risk could be improved to a green status. Officers advised that they would investigate this and report back.

RESOLVED

5.3

- That the report be noted

6. Service and Budget Planning 2014-17 for Norfolk Record Office.

6.1 The Service and Budget Planning 2014-17 for Norfolk Record Office (NRO) report (item 6) by the County Archivist was received. This set out the financial planning context for the authority and gave an indication of what this would mean for the NRO and Community Services.

6.2 The Chairman advised Members that the date of the next Cabinet meeting was 6 January 2014 and not 7 January, as stated at point 6.1.1 of the report.

6.3 During the discussion the following points were noted:-

- All figures within the report were provisional as the budget had not yet been agreed.
- It had been proposed that £35k be used from the reserves in order to support the raising of income through the sale of digital licences. This project would provide digital access to assets held by the NRO, which would ultimately generate income by allowing members of the public to access the images. The County Archivist assured Members that this would be the best use of records whilst ensuring that the statutory duties of the Norfolk Record Office were still fulfilled. School records were the subject of the first contract which the NRO would undertake as part of a national consortium. Parish records were being looked into as the next likely package.
- It was noted that currently budget proposals only addressed £140m of the

£189m which needed to be saved. It was not known as yet how this would affect the budget of the NRO. It was suggested that the potential impact of this should be added to the risk register for the NRO.

- The County Archivist assured Members that the NRO statutory obligations to make proper arrangements for records would continue to be met.

RESOLVED

- 6.4
- That the report be noted.

7. Changes to Opening Hours at Norfolk Record Office; The Archive Centre

7.1 The Changes to Opening Hours at Norfolk Record Office: The Archive Centre report (item 7) by the County Archivist was received. The paper gave additional information on the options available to reduce budget costs by changing the opening hours of the NRO. Following the meeting held in November 2013 there were two remaining options; to close on a Saturday, or to close on a Saturday but open late one day per week.

7.2 During the ensuing discussion the following points were noted:-

- The results of the Putting People First public consultation had been received. 190 responses had been received, of which 107 were in support of the proposal to close the NRO on Saturdays, with 60 against and 23 responses being unclear.
- The cost of opening one evening per week would be £1000 per annum. Additional savings had been found by reducing materials and equipment purchases by £500 each. This was a small proportion of these budgets, which was £10-20000.
- It was suggested that the open evening be held on Thursdays to fit in with late-night shopping in Norwich, and that this should be for a trial period of one year.
- The changes to opening times would be publicised through Twitter, Facebook and other channels. In addition notices would also be displayed. This would ensure that current users and future users were notified of the changes.

RESOLVED (subject to the County Council budget proposals being approved on Feb 17th 2014):-

- That the Norfolk Record Office should close on Saturday mornings from 1 April 2014
- That the Norfolk Record Office should open until 7pm each Thursday starting in the week of 1 April 2014
- That these arrangements be on a trial basis for 12 months and be reviewed at the January 2015 meeting.

8 Norfolk Record Office; Improvements to Archival Storage

8.1 The Improvements to Archival Storage report (item 8) by the County Archivist was received. This provided information on the options available to provide the space required by the NRO to continue to take accessions.

8.2 The County Archivist reported that the NRO would run out of space within the next

three years and would no longer be able to accept new records. In addition this would cause income to be lost from the storage space which was currently rented out, which totalled £18k per annum.

8.3 The available viable options were to:-

1. Extend existing building – cost £875,000
2. Secure additional offsite storage – cost £112,500
3. Optimise current use of space by providing additional storage and reducing storage requirement by means of assessing collections that have not been properly appraised – cost £90,324. This was the recommended action as it would create the required expansion space, deliver the project benefits and represent best value for money.

8.3 During the discussion the following points were made:-

- A decision had not yet been made on whether records from the Registration Service would be passed to the NRO. This would bring significant user benefits to the NRO but would reduce storage space by an additional three years. Financial benefits would be received by the NRO for accepting this acquisition. The NRO would be able to make charges but the basis for this was still subject to discussion.
- The option to secure off-site storage had only been costed for eight years – after this time the process would have to commence again. The costs beyond year 8 were not included in any of the financial appraisals.
- The environment of the current strong room was kept at the optimal temperature and humidity and it would therefore make sense to maximise this area, which the third option would do.
- Consideration should be given to the option of extending the building in the future as the additional storage space provided by option three was a relatively short life span. This had been envisioned when the building had been built and therefore there was likely to be adequate room on the site for expansion. This would be built into the NROs medium to long term planning strategy and a strong business case would need to be developed.

8.6 RESOLVED

- That a combined solution be approved, to maximise existing storage space, deliver the project benefits and offer best value for money.

9. Future Meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted.

Date	Time	Venue
Monday 28 April 2014	10.30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 27 June 2014	10.30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre
Friday 28 November 2014	10.30am	The Green Room, Archive Centre

10. Norfolk Record Office Branding

Further to the last meeting the County Archivist circulated a clearer image of the suggested new logo for the NRO as had been requested, which Members noted.

The meeting concluded at 11:40am.

Dr C. J. Kemp, Chairman of the Committee



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