

NORFOLK RECORDS COMMITTEE

Item No.

Report title:	Long-Term Strategy 2018-2023
Date of meeting:	12 January 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe - Executive Director, CES

Strategic Impact

This report seeks comment from the Norfolk Records Committee on long-term plans for the organizational development of the Norfolk Record Office over the next five years and beyond

Executive Summary

Proposal

The Norfolk Records Committee is asked to consider the long-term strategic aims outlined in this report and comment accordingly so that this information can be used to inform both long-term planning and service planning for 2018-19.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In January 2017, a report was presented to the Norfolk Records Committee on the organizational development of the Norfolk Record Office (NRO). This concentrated on two areas: archive discovery and work with community groups. A number of long-term strategic aims have also been presented to the Committee as part of the annual planning process. These were groups under the headings of accommodation, audience development and engagement, income generation and fundraising, digital preservation, and alternative methods of service delivery.

A further report, presented to the Committee in June 2017, provided details of *Archives Unlocked*, the new archive sector vision statement prepared by the National Archives. This identifies three drivers for change (confidence in data and information, technological change and user expectations) and three ambitions:

- i. Trust: People and institutions trust in the authenticity of archive records, and how they are preserved and presented.
- ii. Enrichment: Archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically.

- iii. Openness: Archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge, and are accessible to all.

1.2 This report now combines all of these strategic objectives for the NRO under revised headings.

Strategic Objectives

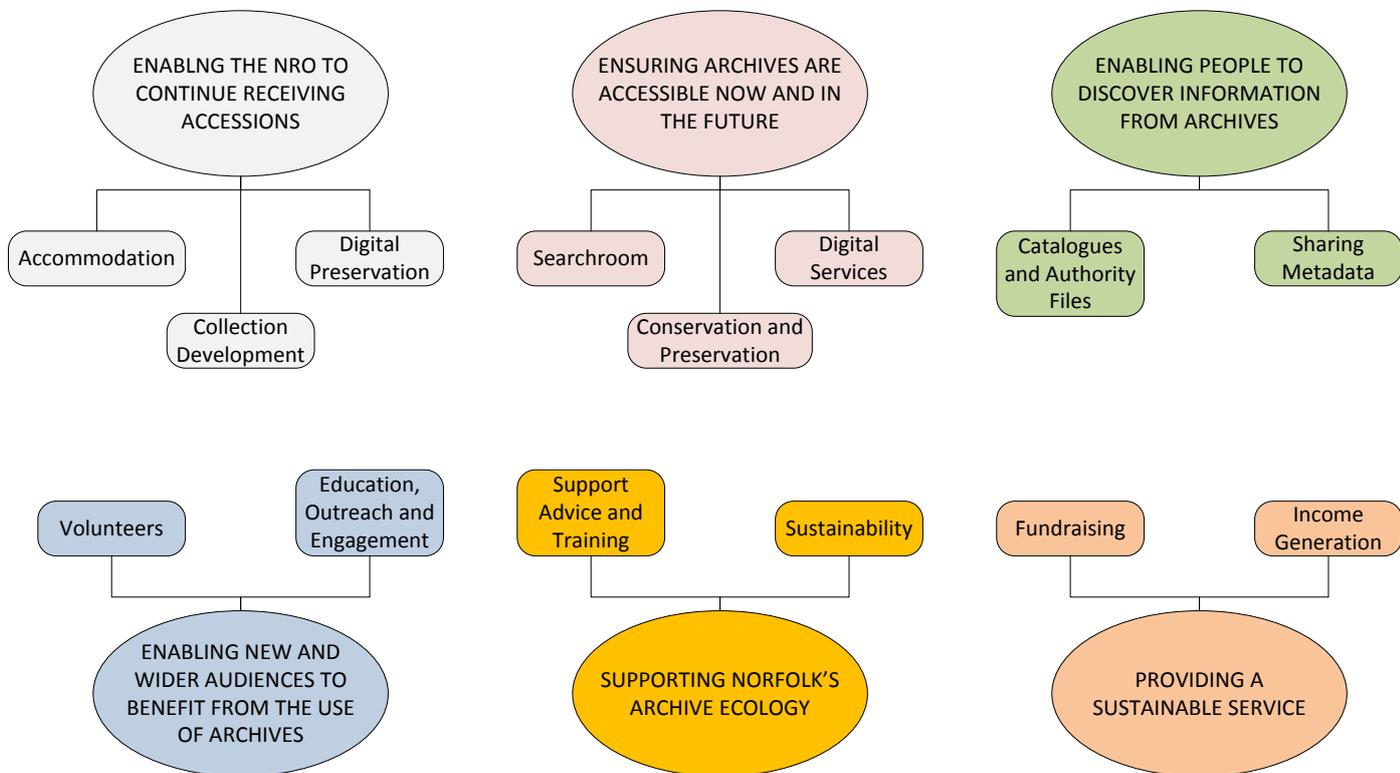


Figure 1: Long-Term Objectives

ENABLING THE NRO TO CONTINUE COLLECTING ARCHIVES

Accommodation

- 2.1 The Norwich home of the NRO, the Archive Centre, opened in 2003 with fifteen years of expansion space in its strongrooms available for new accessions. In addition to the accessions which have been received every year since then, in 2015 the NRO took on the function of providing copy birth, death and marriage certificates. This resulted in an additional 46m³ of records being accessioned (the equivalent of around two years accessions).
- 2.2 Annual service plans since 2014 have included work to create 30m³ of space per year in existing strongrooms. This has been achieved through bespoke packaging, additional shelving and collection management. Whilst it is unlikely that 30m³ will be created every year from now on, by continuing this strongroom work it is estimated that the NRO will have sufficient storage capacity to continue accepting accessions until 2024.

Long-term Plans / Strategy

- 2.3
 - i. Continue to target freeing space in the strongrooms as part of the annual service plan.
 - ii. In 2020, the NRO will carry out a detailed assessment of its storage needs. If this concludes that additional storage is required within the next four years, the NRO will undertake an options appraisal to determine the best way of providing it.

Digital Archives

- 2.4 For the NRO to continue in its role of providing a home for trusted, relevant information, it is essential that it is capable of preserving and providing access to digital records. In 2016/17 the NRO undertook a collaborative pilot project with four other archives in the East of England. This developed skills and enabled it to make better decisions on its long-term strategy.

Long-term Plans / Strategy

- 2.5
 - i. The NRO will implement a full digital preservation workflow. This will enable it to accept a wide range of digital files and carry out the processes required to ensure their accessibility.
 - ii. The NRO will continue to work collaboratively to support digital preservation.

Collection Development

- 2.6 The NRO continues to receive a wide range of archives from across the county, helped by

the fact that accessions can also be received at the King's Lynn Borough Archives. It has also had some success in fundraising when purchases of archives are necessary. However, its resources for active collection development are likely to be limited over the coming years.

Long-term Plans / Strategy

- 2.7 The NRO will continue to receive accessions and react to situations where it becomes aware of important archives being available. An increasingly important area for collection development will be work with community archives and other local groups.

ENSURING ARCHIVES ARE ACCESSIBLE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Searchroom Access

- 3.1 Although there has been a shift to other forms of access, the searchroom remains an essential element in making archives accessible. Digital access to archives is important, but it is highly unlikely that any more than 5% of the Collection will be available online within the next ten years. This is reflected in public use of the searchroom where there has been a significant decline in the number of visitors using microfilms but very little change in the level of use of original documents. When this is combined with online access to digitized materials and the increased number of people using digital cameras in the searchroom, it is clear that use of the Collection is higher than it has ever been.

One significant change in the searchroom has been the construction of a Glass Box at the rear of the microfilm area. This has been used as both a breakout space for groups in the Green Room and as teaching space operating under searchroom rules.

Long-term Plans / Strategy

- 3.2 Ensure that searchroom space is used efficiently and provides an environment conducive to research. This is likely to involve continued reorganization of searchroom space.

Conservation and Preservation

- 3.3 Preserving the physical integrity of its Collection will always remain an important aspect of the NRO's work. A work prioritization system has recently been introduced which has improved the efficiency of this aspect of the service

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 3.4 Conservation and preservation to continue to play an important role in preserving the NRO Collection.
- 3.5 The conservation section will play an important role in supporting meeting the long-term objective of Supporting Norfolk's Archive Ecology (see below)

ENABLING PEOPLE TO DISCOVER INFORMATION FROM ARCHIVES

Cataloguing and Authority Files

- 4.1 It is difficult to understate the importance of descriptive metadata (the information contained in finding aids which enables users to locate and interpret documents). Since the start of the century the NRO has been entering data into a collection management system which has enabled it to publish an online catalogue; retro-conversion is now complete.

Sharing Metadata

- 4.2 Information about archives needs to be accessible through numerous channels. It is essential that the NRO's data is in a form that enables it to benefit from continuing developments in AI and Linked Open Data.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 4.3
- i. Continued additions to and enhancement of archive descriptions
 - ii. Replacement and/or improvement of exiting catalogue systems
 - iii. Use of authority files based on sources that will enhance the potential of NRO data for use on the semantic web.
 - iv. Ensuring data is in a format that can be shared across platforms and services.
 - v. Working with local and national partners to improve the interoperability of data.

ENABLING NEW AUDIENCES TO BENEFIT FROM THE USE OF ARCHIVES

Education, Outreach and Engagement

- 5.1 The NRO has a successful record of accomplishment in education work and this has continued to build over recent years. Alongside this the Record Office continues to attract new users to archives through its outreach and engagement activities. These include workshops, lectures and exhibitions.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 5.2 Whilst continuing with existing successful programmes the NRO needs to expand on ways in which it can work with priority groups within the County to deliver wellbeing benefits.

Volunteers

- 5.3 The NRO volunteer programme has been developed over the past four years. Currently the NRO benefits from over 2000 volunteer hours per year.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 5.4 The NRO will continue to work with volunteers both for the benefit of the service and of the volunteers. The priority area for increased volunteer work will be assisting with transactional level cataloguing. This will help meet the long-term objective of Enabling People to Discover Information from Archives.

SUPPORTING NORFOLK'S ARCHIVE ECOLOGY

Support, Training and Advice

- 6.1 Throughout Norfolk, many people and organizations, both formal and informal, are engaged in researching, collecting and preserving the County's archival heritage – this can be described as Norfolk's Archive Ecology. The NRO is the most significant stakeholding organization within this ecology. By supporting this widespread activity, the NRO can ensure that a wider range of archival material is easily accessible to the public and available for future generations to use.

Sustainability

- 6.2 Whilst some community based groups will continue to renew their membership and secure a long-term future for their work, others will have a shorter lifespan. By working with such groups, the NRO can ensure that the archives they have collected, the digital records they have generated and the descriptions they have written remain useful for generations to come.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 6.3 Develop programmes to support community based work with archives. These will include support for good practice and skills development in many areas including digitization, cataloguing, archive management, preservation, interpretation and research.

The NRO, when necessary and within the terms of its Collecting Policy, will offer a long-term home for archives collected in this way.

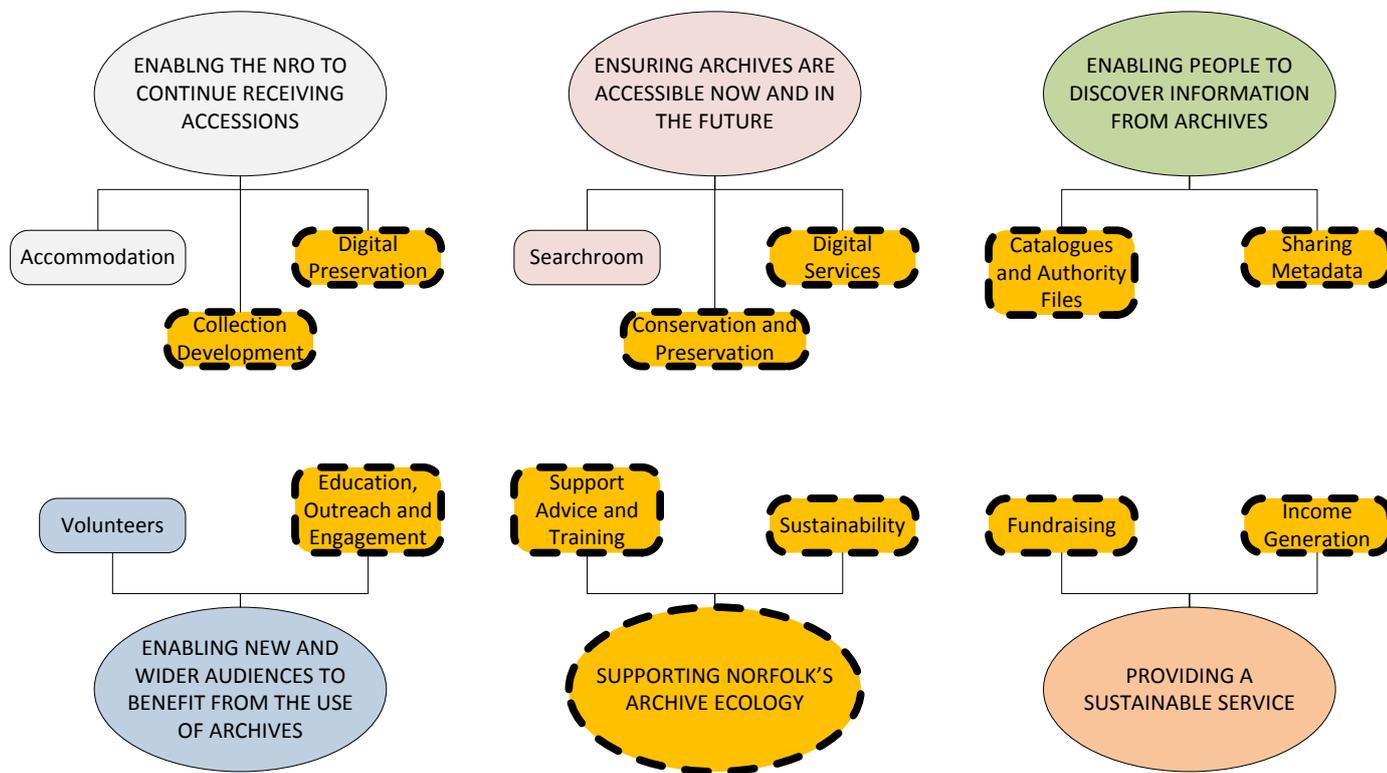


Figure 2. Cross Objective Synergies

PROVIDING A SUSTAINABLE SERVICE

Income Generation

- 7.1 The NRO has increased its generation by around 400% in the last four years. This has been achieved through providing rented accommodation; selling boxes; issuing copy birth, death and marriage certificates; providing reprographic and digitization services; charging for exhibition work; and licencing images to commercial website.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 7.2 Continued to increase income generation. Measures to achieve this will include additional licencing of digital images and increased use of NRO digitization services. The latter will be achieved through improving descriptive metadata as described above.

Fundraising

- 7.3 In 2016 the NRO established the Norfolk Archives and Heritage Development Foundation (NORAH). This charity is now fully operational and is developing its fundraising capacity whilst issuing a series of small grants.

Long-term Plans/ Strategy

- 7.4 The NRO will continue to support the development and administration of NORAH. In turn, this will help support a number of the NRO's other long-term objectives.

Financial Implications

- 8.1 This report will help determine how the NRO prioritizes the use of its budget. As such, it has now other direct financial implications.

Issues, risks and innovation

- 9.1 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.

Background

- 10.1 This report refers to the Norfolk Record Office Service Plan which was approved by the Norfolk Records Committee on 31 March 2016, the report on Organizational Development, approved by the Record Committee on 13 January 2016 and *Archives Unlocked* (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/Archives-Unlocked-Brochure.pdf>).

Officer Contact

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