



# Norfolk County Council

## Norfolk Records Committee

Date: **Friday, 11 January 2019**  
Time: **10:30**  
Venue: **Green Room, Archive Centre, County Hall**

### SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

**5b Feedback from Public Consultation on Service Changes at Norfolk Record Office**

(Page **A2**)

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Date Agenda Published: 8 January 2019



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# Norfolk Records Committee

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Feedback from Public Consultation on Service Changes at Norfolk Record Office</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>11 January 2019</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b>	

## Executive summary

This report provides members with information on the outcomes of the public consultation on changes to the Norfolk Record Office's service.

We received 98 responses to this consultation. Of these the overwhelming majority (86) were from people responding as individuals. Of the respondents who described their relationship to the service, most were people who used the Norfolk Record Office (70). Overall, slightly more of those responding to the consultation agreed with the proposal (43) than disagreed (38) (9 strongly agree / 34 agree / 12 neither agree nor disagree, 22 disagree, 16 strongly disagree).

Key issues and concerns were:

- a) Those who generally agreed with the proposal said they felt it was reasonable and that they understood the need for it. However, some said this with some regret.
- b) Several stated that they were supportive of the proposal if it enabled the Norfolk Record Office to carry on with what they perceived to be its key role of preserving Norfolk's heritage.
- c) Several of those responding said that although they were generally in support of the proposed changes to opening hours they did not support other elements of the proposal, in particular any reduction to acquisition, conservation or outreach.
- d) A number of those agreeing with the proposal said that they felt that they would not be affected by it. One of the main reasons for this was people stating they were retired and therefore could adapt to the proposed new hours.
- e) An equal number felt that they would be directly affected. People stated that the proposed times would restrict the hours that they could visit or that they might have to take time off work.
- f) Several people suggested that the thinking behind the proposal was flawed, that it would not achieve the outcome that we desired or that the evidence we put forward did not support our proposal. In particular there was concern that the impact of the proposal greatly outweighed any saving that would be achieved if the proposal

went ahead.

- g) The most frequently expressed concern was that the proposed hours would prevent working people from being able to access the searchroom.
- h) Where stated, the preferred option for revised hours for the service was Tuesday to Friday (closed Monday). Reasons offered for this included that it was better for people travelling to use the searchroom, it was best not to have a mid-week gap, that Monday closing is in line with other heritage centres and that it suited individuals personally.
- i) People offered alternative options. Of these, the most frequent comments were calls to either maintain the current hours or increase them. There were also calls to keep the late-night opening. A few suggested that the Record Office should open each working day but to start later. There was also some interested in Saturday opening.
- j) People fed back practical issues to take into consideration when deciding the opening days and hours. This included the availability of car-parking, the fact that people often travelled long distances to use the searchroom and the need to widely promote the service and any new opening hours.
- k) The following points were also made:
  - One organisation offered to work with the Norfolk Record Office to help produce new databases that enabled more records to be accessed online, by harnessing the power of their volunteers. They also offered potential help with preserving /conserving any family history documents.
  - That current online resources are not adequate, and that many of the records, such as medieval and early modern manuscripts are not available online at all.
  - That scholars coming to Norwich from other parts of the UK and from abroad would be disadvantaged by the proposals.
  - That photography permits are too expensive for many students who need to consult original materials.
  - That organisations have deposited material at the NRO with the expectation that these would be available for viewing at convenient times.
  - Suggestions received as alternatives to reduced hours included analysis of users from the signing-in register, approaching universities for contributions in order that their students could continue to use the facilities and asking organisations to make contribution for the safe keeping of their records in perpetuity.
  - That the proposal would reduce community cohesion as it would reduce community understanding of our shared heritage.

- One organisation asked that the Norfolk Record Office continue to generate income from the sale of micro films and fiche.

A full summary of the consultation feedback received to this proposal can be seen at Appendix 1 and the consultation document at Appendix 2

## **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, e.g. equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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## Appendix 1: Report on Results of Consultation

### Your views on proposals that would see service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office

#### Respondent information

##### Respondent Numbers

There were 98 responses received for this proposal. Of these, 86 people replied as individuals.

Responding as:		
An individual / member of the public	86	88
A family	2	
On behalf of a voluntary or community group	2	5
On behalf of a statutory organisation	3	
On behalf of a business	0	
A Norfolk County Councillor	0	3
A district or borough councillor	0	
A town or parish councillor	1	
A Norfolk County Council employee	2	
Not Answered	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>

Of the 98 responses received, the majority (93) were online submissions to the consultation.

<b>How we received the responses</b>	
Online submission	93
Email	2
Consultation paper feedback form	2
Letter	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>

### **Responses by groups, organisations and businesses**

Five respondents told us they were responding on *behalf* of a group, organisation or business.

The organisations cited were:

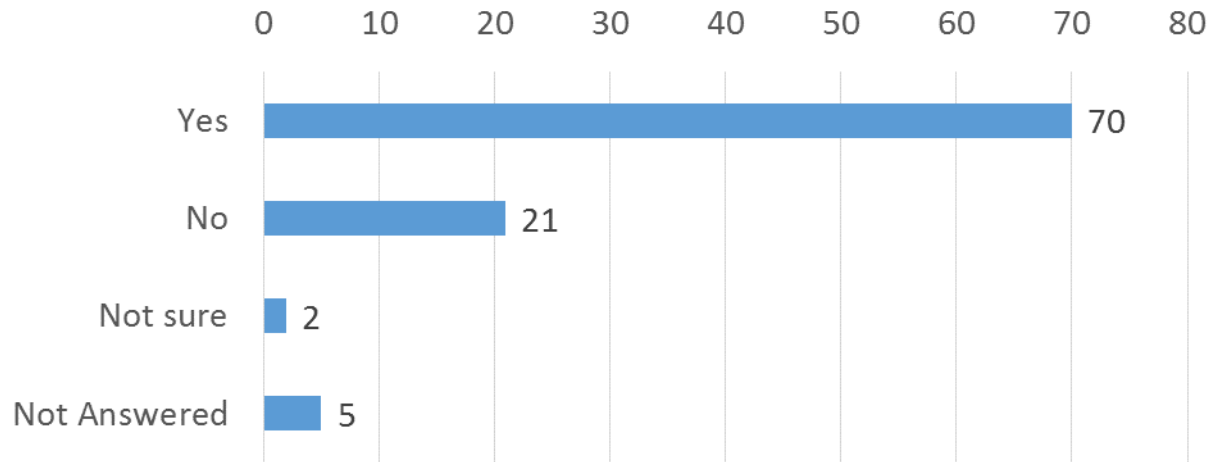
- Chedgrave Parish Council
- Cromer Town Council
- Norfolk Family History Society
- The Norfolk Record Society
- South Norfolk Council

### **Relationships**

**Q1** We asked people whether they currently used the Norfolk Record Office and 93 respondents answered this question. Of those responding:

- 70 currently use Norfolk Record Office services
- 21 don't currently use Norfolk Record Office services
- 2 were not sure whether they currently use Norfolk Record Office services

**Do you use Norfolk Record Office services?**

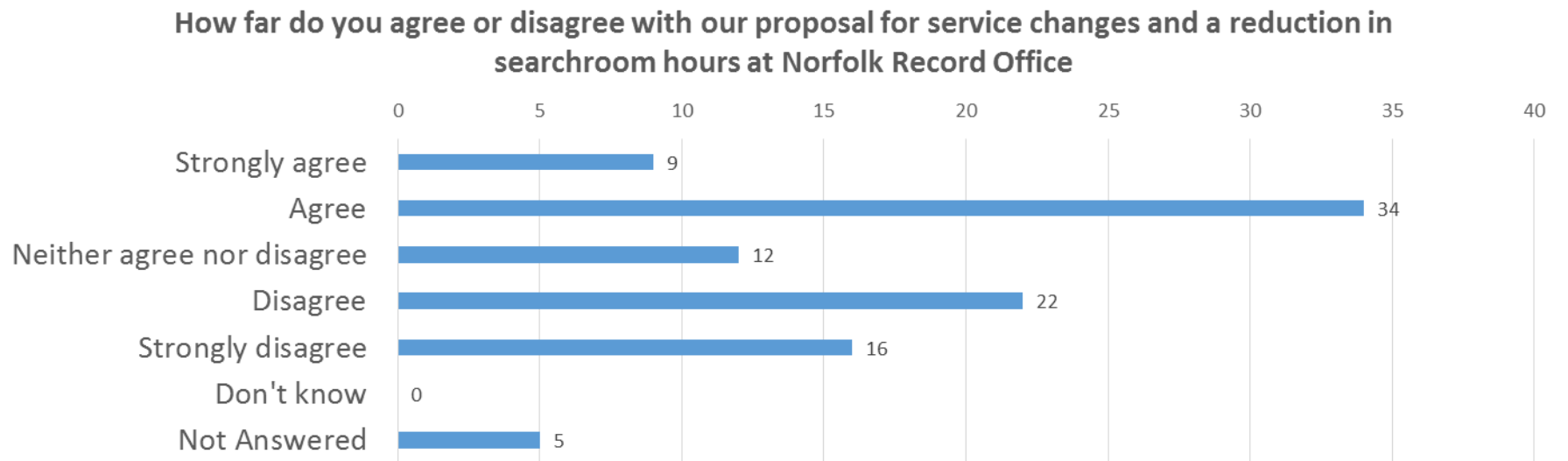


## Summary of findings

### Q2: How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office?

We asked how far people agree or disagree with our proposal and 93 people responded to this question. Of these:

- 9 said they strongly agree
- 34 said they agree
- 12 said they neither agree nor disagree
- 22 said that they disagree and
- 16 said that they strongly disagree





We included an open text box so that people could tell us the reason behind their answer and how, if at all, the proposal would affect them.

Of those strongly agreeing (9) or agreeing (34) with the proposal, people said that the proposal would not affect them, that it was reasonable and a good use of resources. Some said that although they agreed with the proposal around the opening hours they did not agree with the other parts of the proposal, such as a reduction in outreach or acquisition work.

Of those disagreeing (22) or strongly disagreeing (16) with the proposal, people said that they felt the proposal would make it harder for employed people to access the searchroom. People also questioned the thinking behind the proposal, for example that the saving it would achieve wasn't worth the disruption or the proposal would not achieve the cost savings we suggest. Another key issue was that people felt concern that the proposal would restrict access to records and that our heritage needs to be preserved. As above, where some people agreed with the potential change to hours there was a call to maintain, or extend, outreach, acquisition and support from archivists / trained staff.

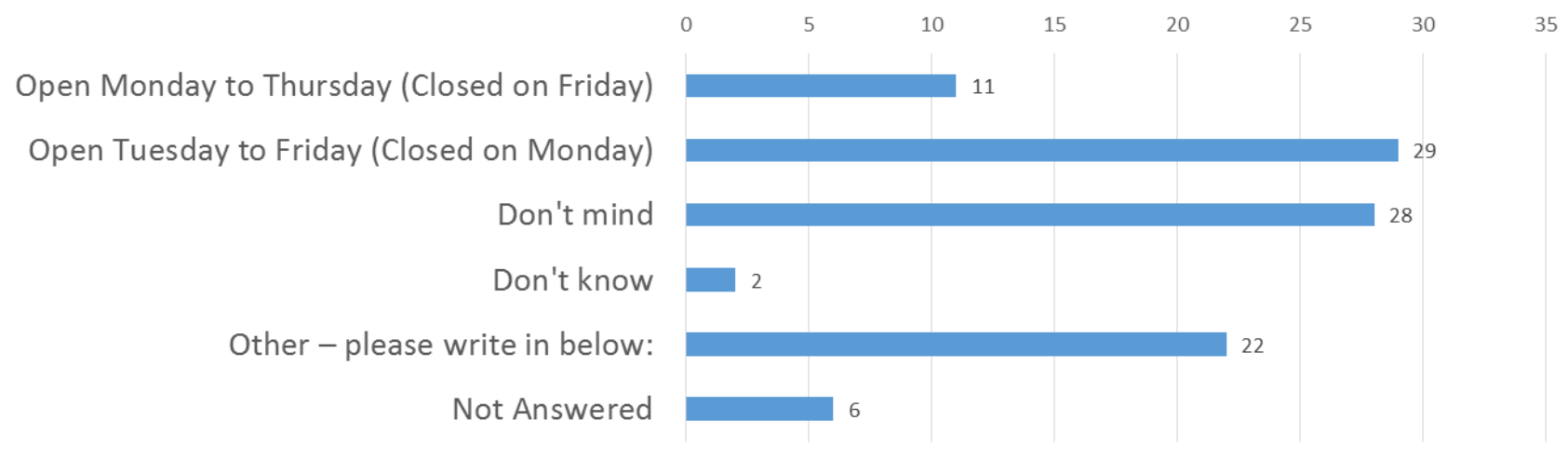
The remainder of the responses said that they neither agree nor disagree (12) or did not answer this question (5). Those that said that they neither agree nor disagree did so for a number reasons. Some said they agree with the proposed hours but not with any reduction in conservation or outreach. Others said that although they understood the need for the proposals and the proposals did not affect them personally they were concerned about the impact on others, in particular access for students.

**Q4: As part of our proposal we are considering reducing the number of hours that the searchroom would be open. Currently the Norfolk Record Office is open Monday to Friday. If our proposal went ahead we would need to decide which hours to open. Which option of any, would you prefer?**

We asked people which option, if any, they would prefer, and 92 people responded. Of these:

- 11 preferred the NRO to open Monday to Thursday (Closed on Friday)
- 29 preferred the NRO to open Tuesday to Friday (Closed on Monday)
- 28 did not mind
- 2 did not know
- 22 suggested alternatives

### What option, if any, do you prefer?



We included an open text box so that people could tell us the reason behind their answer.

Open Monday to Open Thursday (Closed on Friday) – the most frequent reasons people cited for those selecting this preference (11) were that it would allow people to continue their work after the weekend, that it was the least worst option and that it suited them personally.

Open Tuesday to Friday (Closed on Monday) – the most frequent reasons people cited for those selecting this preference (29) were that this option was better for people travelling to use the searchroom, that it was better not to have a gap during the middle of the week, that it was in line with other heritage centres that traditionally don't open on a Monday and that it suited them personally.

Don't mind – the most frequent reasons for people saying that they don't mind which option (28) were that they were retired or that the proposal did not directly affect them.

Twenty-two people selected 'other'. Of these, the most frequent comments were calls to either maintain the current hours or to increase them. People also offered alternative proposals, including opening Monday-Friday but starting at 10m, opening Saturday, opening Wednesday-Saturday, opening Monday-Wednesday and Thursday-Saturday.

## Analysis and comments

Table 1: Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree with the proposal in Q2 How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office?

Table 2: Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree with the proposal in Q2 How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office?

Table 3: Analysis of all comments related to Q4 As part of our proposal we are considering reducing the number of hours that the searchroom would be open. Currently the Norfolk Record Office is open Monday to Friday. If our proposal went ahead we would need to decide which hours to open. Which option of any, would you prefer?

Table 4: Other issues raised to be taken into consideration when making a decision

**Table 1: Analysis of main comments by people who agree/strongly agree with the proposal in Q2 How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office?**

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of times mentioned	Quotes
Comments / observations that generally support the proposals	Where people were generally supportive of the proposals several expressed their view that the proposals were reasonable.	7	<p>“Reduction is reasonable &amp; wouldn't be likely to affect my use of NRO”</p> <p>“Still open a good number of hours and on line availability. At a time when essential services are under threat it is hard to justify the costs of the current extended opening hours.”</p>

	Others felt that search room was currently underused.	3	<p>“Realistic and pragmatic.”</p> <p>“NRO is a wonderful resource but judging from my own experience and the above stats it is substantially underused”</p> <p>“The service appears to be underused”</p>
Impact of proposal on individuals	A number of those expressing agreement to the proposal stated that it did not currently affect them.	7	<p>“Like many users my family history research brings me to the search room very intermittently - most days for a couple of weeks, then maybe not at all for a few months, while I digest my findings and then seek other avenues to explore. I would still be able to work like this under your new opening hour proposals.”</p> <p>“feel that the proposed hours are sufficient and suitable for those wanting to access the information. will not directly affect me, but may in future?”</p> <p>“I would still be able to work like this under your new opening hour proposals. I do not use the Thursday late openings, which seem not to have a big uptake.”</p>
Need for the proposal	Several said that they understood the need for the proposal.	6	<p>“Not just because of austerity, but also the changing nature of research which is increasing use of digital access, the closure times to the search-room make sense”</p>

	<p>Some also talked about their regret or sadness that the proposal had been put forward.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>“I can see why you need to reduce hours and so would support the shorter hours.”</p> <p>“I am an NRO employee. I would prefer that the service remain as it is but I understand the need to reduce costs.”</p> <p>“The move to online services is common to many resource centres and it does have a knock on effect to times of opening and staff requirements so these changes are probably inevitable though sad to see.”</p> <p>“I am very sorry these changes are being thrust upon you by the reduction in budget, and I have ticked 'Agree' only in the hope these changes will preserve an OUTSTANDING service.”</p>
<p>Enable the service to continue and / or preserve the key role of Norfolk Record Office</p>	<p>Several people said that they were supportive of the proposal if it enabled the service overall to continue.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>“Although I will probably be using the records office in the future, the proposals seem a very sensible way of continuing to provide an adequate service for what is obviously a minority interest”</p> <p>“To avoid affecting other aspects of the work of The Record Office the reduction of searchroom hours would be the least damaging”</p> <p>“Any reduction in archive work is regrettable but if</p>

	<p>Some people referenced their comments to what they perceived the key role of the Norfolk Record Office to be.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>opening at 10am and closing one day means cuts to the core work of saving, listing and conserving documents can be avoided then so be it. Without the core functions, there is no service.”</p> <p>“If it is certain that funds have to be reduced then it is reasonable that public access time should be reduced a little in order to help maintain an acceptable emphasis on what I see as the primary function of the NRO : to maintain the inflow and conservation of documents.”</p>
<p>Concerns related to other proposed service changes</p>	<p>Several people stated that although they agreed with the proposed reduction in hours they did not agree with other proposed service changes relating to outreach, volunteer support and conservation/acquisition.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>“I agree to the reduction in search room hours, but I do not agree to all the proposed service changes. I want to see MORE digitisation and conservation, not less. That is the role and responsibility of a records office.”</p> <p>“I note the fleeting mention of reduction in actual conservation activities with great alarm. This is NOT about search room access”</p> <p>“ ...concerns -  - the reduction of educational and outreach services. Implanting research activities in the young generation is key to later usage, and for adults who might not otherwise use the facility. Interacting with the actual documents creates lasting memories.”</p>

**Table 2: Analysis of main comments by people who disagree/strongly disagree with the proposal in Q2 How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office?**

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of responses	Quotes
Impact of proposal on individuals	People explained how they would be directly affected by the proposal.	7	<p>“As a historian whose studies are dependant on examining original documents, I would find a four rather than five day week considerably affect my work.”</p> <p>“For one, fewer hours means I'm less able to attend the NRO full stop.”</p> <p>“I like going early in the morning and having a good three hours work time before midday-mornings are easier for me than afternoons as I have to be home due to childcare”</p>
Impact of proposal on different types of users	Several respondents expressed concerns that the proposal would impact working people.	7	<p>“People have to work, reduced access times reduce the population of people able to use the service, not everyone wants or is able to use online services”</p> <p>“For those who work it is almost impossible to access the search room as it is not open at weekends.”</p> <p>“Although I am now retired and able to access the Record Office more flexibly, when I was working,</p>

			the extra days opening was a bonus and I used to go for an hour at the end of several days. This will still impact those who work.”
Comments suggesting that the thinking behind the proposals is flawed	Several people felt that our proposal would not achieve the outcome that we desired or that the evidence we put forward did not support our proposal.	7	<p>“Your findings make it clear that the focus is more on original documents, yet you propose to reduce access to these. This is illogical.”</p> <p>“The savings that can be made by this action are too small to warrant the time spent consulting and actioning them. These are niche services but very important to those who use them. I would expect that changes and efficiencies could be made elsewhere in the service that would not lead to the reduction in opening times”</p> <p>“I don't mind a reduction in searches on hours but don't think your analysis really indicates only having a late opening of once a month. A service out of working hours helps the service be fairer to all age groups, also many people in norwich may leave work at 4/4.30 so be able to quest items before 5pm but not have time to work on them before closing.”</p>
	A few people stated they thought our proposals went against the original funding basis.	3	<p>“The proposed cuts are a denial of the premises on which the publicly funded new record office was founded when it opened in 2003.”</p>
Concerns around access	There were concerns that the proposals would restrict access to important	5	<p>“It will restrict my access to the historical sources and the knowledgeable and helpful staff”</p>



	records.		<p>“Reducing access to the county's history is not acceptable”</p> <p>“...reduced access times reduce the population of people able to use the service ...”</p>
Concerns related to other proposed service changes	Some people stated that although they agreed with the proposed reduction in hours they did not agree with other proposed service changes relating to outreach, volunteer support and conservation/acquisition.	4	<p>“The public opening hours changes make sense on the figures given, but the cutting of education &amp; outreach seems odd - if people are unaware of the Record Office &amp; how accessible &amp; friendly it is then useage will drop further. The cutting of item acquisition also seems wrong”</p>
	There were calls to maintain:		
	Outreach work	4	<p>“Your outreach work is also invaluable.”</p> <p>“I do disagree strongly with any change of focus which has an adverse effect on volunteering, educational events and public engagement events which should be at the core of the service.”</p>
	Acquisition	3	<p>“Resource needs to be given to processing new acquisitions, they are often being donated I'm good faith by the public and a lack of staff will result in huge backlogs, lack of access and lack of care. Problems will get worse in the future and many important records will be lost”</p>
	Volunteer support	2	<p>“As well as using the Records office, I am a volunteer and it is volunteers who are helping to</p>

			make online searches of documents possible. If you reduce the support to volunteers or the volunteer numbers then this would reduce the amount of documents which can be indexed and online for searches”
Concerns about staffing reductions	People also commented on staff reductions.	5	<p>“The removal of front line staff would have an adverse effect on those users who require a level of expertise that often only they can provide. The Record Office is not just an assembly of records, in order to use it without wasting many hours investigating unproductive sources, the level advice and assistance on hand is key”</p> <p>“Your staff are as valuable as the records you hold.”</p> <p>“The archivists are crucial in supporting researchers.”</p>
Other concerns / comments	<p>Individuals expressed other concerns about the proposal. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposal would deter people from research and/or reduce the numbers using the service</li> <li>- Restricting the hours would mean that the searchroom might be busier when it was open.</li> </ul>	<p>3</p> <p>2</p>	<p>“It will result in fewer people using the Record Office.”</p> <p>“I trust that if the reduced hours mean search facilities and readers are busy so not available this will be reviewed. I would be very annoyed to arrive only to be told sorry we are too busy!”</p>

	- That the proposed change to hours was too large	2	“This is a massive change in the service which would be very unsuitable for my needs as a student. Reducing the open hours from 42 to 28 is an unacceptably large cut.”
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**Table 3: Analysis of all comments related to Q4 As part of our proposal we are considering reducing the number of hours that the searchroom would be open. Currently the Norfolk Record Office is open Monday to Friday. If our proposal went ahead we would need to decide which hours to open. Which option of any, would you prefer?**

Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of responses	Quotes
Reasons behind a preference for opening Tuesday to Friday	Those favouring this option did so for a variety of reasons.	5	<p>“If people are traveling to use the resource for more than one day then encouraging them to come Tues-Fri means they could still access the Heritage Centre on a Saturday, where as arriving on the Sunday for Monday means there is less for them to do/see”</p> <p>“Record offices open on a Friday can enable weekend visitors to use their services, ie travel to Norwich on a Thursday night, use NRO on Friday. Mondays less useful as one needs to travel home Monday night in order to work on Tuesday!”</p> <p>“For community members, on some bus routes across Norfolk, there are more bus services on a Friday rather than Monday - so a greater accessibility reason for a Friday opening.”</p>
	Some felt that this option would be better for those needing to travel to visit the NRO searchroom.		
	People also cited that this option suited	5	“Being retired I can choose when I come into

	<p>them personally.</p> <p>Others stated that they would prefer the NRO to be open on consecutive days.</p> <p>Two respondents pointed out that there were several Mondays in the year that the NRO was already closed due to bank holidays.</p> <p>Others pointed out that Monday closing was in line with practice elsewhere in the heritage sector.</p> <p>Other reasons mentioned only once included:</p>	<p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Norwich but for me Friday is a more convenient day than Monday.”</p> <p>“If I come to the RO I might stay in Norwich overnight to maximise my use of the searchroom on two consecutive days so a late evening opening followed by an early opening time would suit people like me”</p> <p>“it is recognised that opening consecutive days is better than having a break mid-week.”</p> <p>“If there has to be a reduction, better not to be mid-week”</p> <p>“...probably closing Mondays would have less of an impact as several are Bank Holidays anyway.”</p> <p>“People are used to museums and other heritage being closed Mondays.”</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- that this option would be more suitable for academics</li> </ul>	1	“Some of your users will be academics. Conferences tend to take place at the end of the week or over the weekend. Many visiting academics will therefore use the Record Office on a Friday rather than a Monday.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- and that it was the least worst option.</li> </ul>	1	“The least worst option available, taking into account the bank holiday Mondays when the NRO is already going to be closed.”
Reasons behind a preference for opening Monday to Thursday	<p>People offered a variety of reasons for selecting this option, including:</p> <p>Allowed continuity from the weekend</p> <p>People also cited personal preferences</p> <p>Other reasons mentioned only once included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- that this option would be better for staff</li> <li>- that it was the least worst option.</li> </ul>	<p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>“Continuity for researchers who have been investigating online sources at weekends.”</p> <p>“Since the room cannot be open at the weekend, I can make better use of MY time if I can attached Friday to the weekend for other purposes”</p> <p>“I think staff would prefer a Friday off instead of Mondays as it makes a nice long weekend break”</p> <p>“The lesser of the evils.”</p>
Calls to maintain or increase existing opening	Some people stated that they wanted us to maintain the opening hours as they	11	“Keep the same as now”

hours	<p>currently are.</p> <p>There were also calls to keep the late-night opening in some form</p> <p>A few called for hours to be increased</p>	<p>9</p> <p>3</p>	<p>“Do not reduce hours”</p> <p>“prefer no closure”</p> <p>“remain as Monday to Friday”</p> <p>“The retention of the late night service is important”</p> <p>“Keep Thursday lates - you can also hold talks and education after work hours so those of us who work full time can go”</p> <p>“I think the late opening session allows those with daytime commitments the opportunity to access the searchroom and also a longer session for those that can only manage to travel to Norwich once a week.”</p> <p>“Availability of the search room is essential, and indeed should be extended to weekends.”</p> <p>“My journey includes both, buses and trains, from my home in Essex and I would propose an increase in hours for the searchroom to be open.”</p>
Alternative suggestions	People put forward alternative opening hours.	8	<p>“Scrap a weekday, perhaps Thursday, and open all day on Saturday.”</p> <p>“It should be open daily but from 10 instead of 9. This will create a saving but not exclude anyone.”</p> <p>“Reduced hours five day working.”</p>

	In particular, Saturday opening was mentioned.	4	<p>“Should open Saturdays so as to be more accessible to the working population”</p> <p>“You should include Saturday opening so that those who work in the week and pay for the service through their taxes can actually use the service.”</p>
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Table 4: Other issues raised to be taken into consideration when making a decision			
Overall theme	Issues raised	Number of responses	Quotes
Other issues raised to be taken into consideration when making a decision	Some respondents said we needed to take the availability of car-parking into account when deciding which day to open.	5	<p>“One of the issues surrounding the RO, if coming any distance, is car parking availability. If I arrive shortly after 9.00 a.m. I don't have too long to wait before it opens. There also tends to be more car parking spaces.”</p> <p>“One problem is parking at County Hall, possibly of tailoring opening times to times when parking is lighter?”</p>
	The need to promote any new opening times.	4	<p>“Publicising the open hours would be essential, i.e. a telephone recorded message, or even make visiting the searchroom by appointment only.”</p> <p>“So long as it is well advertised it does not make any difference”</p>

	The need to promote the service	4	“The NRO needs to be doing more to increase its profile with the general public, not less.”
Ideas	Some people suggested alternative ways to save money / maintain the existing service. These included:  - Charging for the service	4	“Maybe a small charge could be levied for those that visit the record office, say £5 an entry, very little to pay to access the wealth of documents available.”

## Other information

### Other information relevant to the consultation

Organisations responding expressed the following views not captured elsewhere in this summary:

- One organisation offered to work with the Norfolk Record Office to help produce new databases that enabled more records to be accessed online, by harnessing the power of their volunteers. They also offered potential help with preserving /conserving any family history documents.
- That current online resources are not adequate, and that many of the records, such as medieval and early modern manuscripts are not available online at all.
- That scholars coming to Norwich from other parts of the UK and from abroad would be disadvantaged by the proposals.
- That photography permits are too expensive for many students who need to consult original materials.



- That organisations have deposited material at the NRO with the expectation that these would be available for viewing at convenient times.
- Suggestions received as alternatives to reduced hours included analysis of users from the signing-in register, approaching universities for contributions in order that their students could continue to use the facilities and asking organisations to make contribution for the sake keeping of their records in perpetuity.
- That the proposal would reduce community cohesion as it would reduce community understanding of our shared heritage.
- One organisation asked that the Norfolk Record Office continue to generate income from the sale of micro films and fiche.

We received two comments that related to the way we undertook this consultation.

“I object to question 2, which is badly written. I agree to the reduction in search room hours, but I do not agree to all the proposed service changes.”

“But there is no option to raise Council Tax by sufficient to balance your budget, this implies you have decided BEFORE the consultation!”

**Produced by Stakeholder and Consultation Team**  
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## Your views on proposals that would see service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office

### Overview

Norfolk County Council helps make the county better for everyone who lives or works here or travels to Norfolk. The many services we run include ensuring children and young people have the best start in life, providing the fire and rescue service, protecting vulnerable people, maintaining a safe road system and helping improve the economy. We spend over a billion pounds every year providing public services.

The use of our services, particularly by those becoming older, is growing every year. Demand is rising but the amount of money we receive from central government is declining; we now receive £204 million less each year, compared to 2011/12, and this is also expected to fall to zero by 2020/21.

We have developed a financial strategy to overcome these challenges through these principles:

- Offering our help early to prevent and reduce demand for specialist services
- Joining up our work so that similar activities and services are easily accessible, done well and done once
- Being business-like and making the best use of digital technology to ensure value for money
- Using evidence and data to target our work where it can make the most difference.

Since 2011/12 we have saved the best part of £364 million, including £246 million of efficiency savings. We are proposing to save £79 million, including new saving proposals for

2019/20 to 2021/22, over the next three years and we are also identifying ways of bridging a remaining gap of £45.98 million.

Even though we are proposing to increase council tax next year, by the minimum required to put our finances on a sound footing, the amount of money we hope to raise wouldn't be enough to balance our budget.

This means we must continue to make some difficult decisions about how we spend your money.

The council has therefore been looking at how we can save money on all our services, community and environmental services.

We are proposing to change the focus of our staff which would mean a reduction in opening hours for the Norfolk Record Office searchroom and affect the level of some other services that we provide.

**This proposal would save us £75,000 in 2019/20.**

## **Why we are consulting**

We want to find out what people think about our proposal and how it might affect them if it went ahead.

We are consulting through:

- This online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy.
- Paper copies available in the Norfolk Record Office searchroom.
- Individual letters and / or meetings with stakeholders including Heritage Lottery Fund, Norfolk Record Society, Norfolk Family History Society, Norfolk Archives and Heritage Development Foundation, Diocese of Norwich, Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society and Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group.

We are consulting from 5 November 2018 to 23 December 2018. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

**If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email [haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk), call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.**

## **Personal information, confidentiality and data protection**

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our proposals that would see service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council's data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. You can find a copy of our privacy statement at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy>

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer.

## Background

The Norfolk Record Office collects and preserves unique archives relating to the history of Norfolk and makes them accessible to people in the county and across the world. Our team conserve documents, run education programmes, provide research advice and act as a first point of contact for people who are new to using the archives. As well as providing access to records used in historical research, the NRO acts a place of record for information relating to government, administration and citizenship.

Both the work of the Norfolk Record Office and the way that people access records is changing.

The NRO now provides many online services. In particular they issue copies of birth, death and marriage certificates. The NRO also take digital copies of historic records on request and charge for this service. Digital records can also be made available online. Whilst making the NRO collection more widely available, these services have also enabled the Record Office to increase its income generation by over 300% in the last five years. Although there have been changes in the way people access the NRO services, the level of use has never been higher.

One of the services that the Norfolk Record Office offers is a public searchroom where people can access the collection. This is open to anyone and is free of charge (many of the documents held by the NRO are covered by legislation and the public have a right of access to them). As well as accessing original documents produced from the strongrooms, the public can use microfilms, online and printed sources. An essential part of the service offered is face-to-face advice; without this people who use the service would have great difficulty navigating their way through the enormous amount of information available. An archivist and two or three members of support staff are needed to operate the searchroom.

The Norfolk Record Office has a gross budget of approximately £856,000 per year, £220,000 of which comes from income generation.

## **What we have considered when developing our proposals**

When developing our proposals, we have taken the following things into account:

### **The changing nature of how people access our records and archives**

Since 2010, there have been significant changes in the way people use our searchroom. Our figures show that whilst there has been a reduction in the number of users of microforms and published (known as surrogate sources) there has been a steady and, recently, increasing number of people using original documents.

The decline in the use of surrogate sources is almost entirely due to the number of sources now available on-line. The NRO has licensed key family history resources to three commercial websites. This means they are accessible from anywhere, 24 hours a day whilst providing an income stream to support the Record Office. For Norfolk residents, these websites can be accessed free of charge in the Record Office in Norwich and King's Lynn and the Norfolk Heritage Centre. One of the sites can also be accessed free of charge in libraries across the county.

Although significant in making some key sources available, online access to digitized collections represents only between four and five percent of the collection. The remainder is only accessible as original documents. Whilst more documents are digitized every year it is unlikely the proportion of the collection available online will grow beyond this as rates of accumulation exceed rates of digitization.

Another change in use is the widespread use of digital photography. In the past, many users of original documents had no choice but to spend many days in the searchroom taking notes. Nowadays, many users choose to purchase a photography permit and take their own digital images so that they can carry on their research later at home. Others choose not to visit the Record Office, but to pay to have archives digitized.

## **The numbers of people who use the different Record Office services**

The average number of people using our different services on a weekly basis over the last 18 months are:

- Average searchroom Use: 91
- Remote access services: emails, letters, online orders etc: 285
- Attendance at education and outreach events: 192
- Sessions on online catalogue: 739

## **The length of time that people spend in the searchroom**

Visitors using the searchroom tend to stay for a long time. We estimate the average length of a visit to the searchroom to be between three and four hours.

## **The numbers of people accessing the searchroom on different days**

The average number of people using our searchroom each day over the last five years are:

Monday: 18

Tuesday: 17

Wednesday: 16

Thursday: 21

Friday: 19

## How people use the Thursday late-night opening

We have monitored how the searchroom is used on our Thursday late-night opening. Most of those using our services on that evening are staying on from the afternoon rather than arriving later in the evening. We have looked at the number of document requests at our late-night openings over a period of 27 weeks.

Number of document requested after 5pm	Number of weeks
0	9
1-5	12
6+	6

This table shows, for example, that in nine of the 27 weeks we analysed, no documents were requested at our late-night opening. People could still be working in the searchroom on documents that they requested earlier on in the day.

## The feedback we received during the last time we consulted on changes to the Norfolk Record Office.

Our previous consultation showed us the importance to users of the service of the searchroom being open on consecutive days. Some users may travel a considerable distance to use the Record Office and a mid-week break would not be welcome to them.

## Actions we are already taking to make our searchroom more efficient

We now have fewer staff on duty in the searchroom. We've created a new flexible glass educational space within the Record Office. This means we can run groups and events with fewer staff. We have also increased the number of shelves. This means that more library items are available for public use without having to be requested.

In December, the service will further reorganise the searchroom to ensure that staffing is used as efficiently as possible.



## Previous consultations

We consulted on proposals to reduce the opening hours, staffing and work of the Norfolk Record Office as part of our Re-imagining Norfolk budget consultation 2016-19.

We proposed to:

- Reduce the opening hours of the Norfolk Record Office to approximately 24 hours per week
- Only accept new items for the archives on two days a week by appointment
- Stage exhibitions when they are funded externally
- Stop purchasing documents to add to our collection
- Reduce the amount of conservation work we do; and
- Stop the archive specialists working at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library.

That proposal was to save approximately £148,000 (£86,000 in 2016-17, £20,000 in 2017-18 and £42,000 in 2018-19).

In responding to our consultation, of those that disagreed with proposal:

- half highlighted their view of the intrinsic value of preserving cultural heritage
- some made specific comments about the importance of protecting the conservation element of the service.

Of those that agreed with the proposal:

- some stated that they felt the service is not essential
- others agreed, with the proviso that the service remain in place in the long term.

Norfolk County Council decided not to go ahead with the proposal at that time.

## Our proposal

We are proposing to refocus the work that our staff do. If we reduce the time staff spend in the search room we can use this time for digitising documents and producing copy certificates which would save money, maintain levels of income generation and increase the accessibility of our collection by putting more records online

The Norfolk Record Office searchroom is currently open for 41.5 hours each week:

Monday 9.00 - 17.00

Tuesday 9.30 - 17.00

Wednesday 9.00 - 17:00

Thursday 9.00 - 19:00

Friday 9.00 - 17:00

.....

We are proposing to reduce the number of hours that the searchroom would be open from 41.5 hours a week to between 28 and 30 hours a week. If these changes were to go ahead the searchroom would be open:

Tuesday 10.00 - 17.00

Wednesday 10.00 - 17.00

Thursday 10:00 - 17:00 (And until 19:00 one Thursday a month)

And either Monday or Friday 10:00 - 17.00

.....

Our proposal to prioritise the work of our staff on digitisation and certificates would also mean:

- There might be fewer education and outreach events.

- There would be fewer staff to help support volunteers and students on work experience.
- We would not be able to process and conserve as many documents. In other words, we would not be able to do as much work on existing items and new ones coming into our collection.

As part of this saving we are also proposing to save money by reducing the amount of conservation materials that we use. We would not compromise on the quality of the materials though.

**If our proposal went ahead we would save £75,000 in 2019/20.**

## **Who would be affected by our proposal and how**

People who use our searchroom services would be affected by this proposal. The proposal could affect working people who may not be able to use the searchroom during working hours and relied on the Thursday late night opening. However, we are proposing to still have a late-night opening once a month.

Other people using record office services might be affected. The change in focus of staff might mean that there are fewer outreach and educational events for people to attend. The NRO may also not be able to support as many volunteers or people on work experience placements.

Some staff on temporary contracts would not have these renewed.

## Have your say

1. Do you currently use Norfolk Record Office services? Please tick (✓) one only:

Yes

No

Not sure

2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

3. Why do you say that? Please briefly write in below, including how the proposal might affect you:

**4. As part of our proposal we are considering reducing the number of hours that the searchroom would be open. Currently the Norfolk Record Office is open Monday to Friday. If our proposal went ahead we would need to decide which hours to open. Which option, if any, would you prefer? Please select one only:**

Open Monday to Thursday (Closed on Friday)

Open Tuesday to Friday (Closed on Monday)

Don't mind

Don't know

Other – please write in below

**5. Why do you say that? Please write in below:**

## About you

**6. Are you responding as...?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- An individual / member of the public
- A family
- On behalf of a voluntary or community group
- On behalf of a statutory organisation
- On behalf of a business
- A Norfolk County Councillor
- A district or borough councillor
- A town or parish councillor
- A Norfolk County Council employee

**7. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?**

Please write your answer in the box:

**8. Are you...?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

**7. How old are you?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85 or older
- Prefer not to say

**8. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

**9. How would you describe your ethnic background?** Please tick (✓) one answer only:

White British

White Irish

White other

Mixed / multiple ethnic group

Asian or Asian British

Black / African / Carribean / Black British

Prefer not to say

Other ethnic background - please describe below

**10. What is your first language?**

Please write your answer in the box:

**11. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)**

Please write your answer in the box:



## How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings to this consultation to our Communities Committee on 16 January 2019. The report will feed back what people have told us about the potential impact of our proposal. The feedback will also be reported at Full Council on 11 February 2019.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.

**You can fill in our online feedback form at: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget)**

**You can send back a paper feedback form to:**

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

**Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.**

**November 2018**

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