

Report of the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning and Culture)

Future of the City Archive Service

Summary

1. This report proposes a way forward for the future of the City Archive.

Background

2. In January 2005 the Executive received a report of the Leisure and Heritage Scrutiny Board. This led to the adoption of the vision for the City Archive set out in Annex A. In March this year the Executive agreed that a feasibility study should be undertaken in pursuit of the vision and to address the pressing need to re-house the collection and bring about step change in the number of people using it. It was agreed that the study would consider the potential to establish a trust to take responsibility for the city archive and would set out a project plan to implement any new arrangements recommended.
3. The study has been undertaken by Richard Taylor, Senior Curator - Knowledge and Access at the National Railway Museum, who has been seconded to the Council to act as a consultant. It was agreed that he would report back after the first 6 months which would be spent undertaking the feasibility investigation and developing options. His report is attached at Annex B. A further 3 month lead in period is now available prior to implementation of any new arrangements from 1 April 2009.

Consultation

4. Consultation has taken place with all stakeholders as part of the feasibility study. Details are set out in Annex B.

Conclusions from Richard Taylor's report

5. The key conclusions set out in Richard Taylor's report are:
 - The City Archive has significant development potential, but no leadership, management or financial capacity to allow it to unlock that potential.
 - The Archive is relevant to every citizen and to the city strategies of a thriving city, an inclusive city, a learning city, and a cultural city, but it has no capacity to develop outreach to new users.
 - The Archive's Unique Selling Proposition is its continuity as the record of civic life and accountability for 800 years, and this USP should be reinforced.

- Significant external funding opportunities are available to local authority archives, and funding bodies have expressed interest in the City Archive.
- The Council will maximise success in grant applications by demonstrating an active commitment to the Archive, backed by a high percentage of matched funding.
- There is high potential to form partnerships with other archives in the city, but they are reluctant to engage until the Archive's remit and funding is stabilised and the Council show managerial and financial commitment to the service.
- The Archive and Local History Library are the only parts of the Library service eligible for Heritage Lottery funding, and managing them as separate entities fragments their development potential.
- Developing the Central Library within the Cultural Quarter offers the chance to create a new city-centre public Archive. This could be funded through an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- The City Archive is too small to benefit from transfer to an operating trust, but an arms-length development trust modelled on the successful Hampshire Archives Trust will increase the Archive's attractiveness to private donors and will maximise the efficiency of a capital grant to the Archives.

6. The study makes detailed recommendations which can be summarised as:

- Retain the City Archive in-house, within the Library service, and merge the Archive and Local Studies into a single service with a single public services team and unified standard of public offer.
- Create the capacity to increase user numbers, opening hours and outreach by funding one additional full-time Information Assistant.
- Provide strategic leadership and the management capacity to realise the services potential by abolishing the post of City Archivist and creating a Strategic Development Manager to lead the merged service and to raise development funding through cultivation of funders and the submission of external funding applications.
- Re-focus the Archive on its original remit to preserve and maintaining the unique York Civic Archive and apply to have the Civic Archive formally Designated as being of national importance. Cease general collecting of archives in other areas, and carry out a rationalisation of the existing collections.
- Celebrate and reinforce the Archive's return to its core remit by designating the Lord Mayor as Honorary Keeper of the City Archive.
- Create a Development Trust based on the Hampshire Archives Trust model to act as a focus for fundraising, engagement with stakeholders and creating partnerships with other organisations.
- Make a one-off start-up capital grant of £30k to the Development Trust to allow it to invest in development partnerships with other archives, and in increasing the trading potential of the merged service.

- Transfer all Archives and Local History trading activities to the Development Trust under a Service Level Agreement. Incentivise the Trust to increase trading income by allowing it to keep all additional net income it generates above the 2008-2009 level.
 - Initiate a project to re-locate the Archive and Local History to the Central Library as part of existing plans to develop the Library building.
 - Make a capital contribution to this project of £0.5m, which can be used as the basis for an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders.
7. The report recommends that members invest in:
- A new post of Development Manager
 - An additional post of Information Assistant at either 0.8 (Option 1) or 1.0 fte (Option 2)
 - A one-off grant to the development trust of £30k

Options

8. The options arising from the report are:
- i. do nothing and maintain the status quo
 - ii. invest in the development of the service as set out in the recommendations above

Analysis

9. It has long been recognised that status quo is not an option:
- There are long-term concerns about the ability of the current facilities to house the collections adequately; the Public Record Office (now the National Archives) issued a report in 2000 which made it clear that the accommodation for the City Archive was inadequate and must be addressed. Our rights to accept deposits of tithe and manorial documents have been withdrawn due to concerns about the ability to care for them satisfactorily in the current building. The building has recently been affected by flooding. A further National Archive inspection was undertaken last month. The National Archive has delayed submitting its report, awaiting the outcome of this meeting. The adoption of a clear and positive strategy by the Council will go a long way to restore the confidence of the National Archive.
 - The archive facilities do not encourage access: space is limited, there are low staffing levels and a lack of virtual access.
 - Following the budget cut made in last year's budget process it is no longer possible to fund the former post of City Archivist and the necessary leadership and professional expertise is now lacking to develop the service.
10. Investment in the service on the other hand will provide the necessary capacity to develop the service in line with the agreed vision. Within 5 years the service will make significant progress towards the ten year vision, and specifically:
- The collections will be a source of learning, interest, inspiration, and fun for all sections of the community, widely used for a wide range of purposes

- All citizens will be aware of what the archives have to offer them and there will step change in the number of users
- The collections will be housed in excellent premises and conservation activity will be greatly increased
- Hours of opening will be increased including at weekends
- Partnership working will be the norm with all the major institutions in the city as well as all the local history groups
- Virtual access will be increased
- The archives will play a significant role in show-casing York's achievements, raising York's profile, and encouraging people to visit and to invest in York
- The collections will be supporting the city's key priorities, not just in learning e.g. but in other areas, e.g. providing positive activities for young people
- An effective modern records system will manage records destined for the Archive as well as limited-life records with a known future disposal date

Next Steps

11. The study proposes a five-year implementation timetable to turn around the City Archive and to realise its full development potential. Key milestones are:

April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Implement the new merged structure – Strategic Development Manager & Information Assistant in post
July 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trustees recruited for Development Trust – Publicity campaign for new service
September 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development Trust launched
September 2009 – March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Collections rationalisation plan for the Archive and Local History drawn up and consulted on
2010 – 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quick-win fundraising and development projects – Collections rationalisation – Application for formal Designation of the Civic Archive – Stage 1 HLF funding application for new city-centre Archive and Local History service at Central Library
2011 – 2013 (depending on success of Stage 1 application)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stage 2 HLF funding application for new city-centre Archive and Local History service – Relocation to new site

12. In the meantime the Archive staff have been doing some excellent work over the last six months within existing resources:

- addressing the big backlog of collections management issues, working in partnership with other institutions
- giving the premises a face-lift making them brighter and more welcoming to users

- producing a new leaflet has been produced promoting the service in an attractive way
- facilitating research in support of the Hungate dig to help York Archaeological Trust's understanding of the site
- obtaining funding for 2 education projects: A Secret History: York and the Nuclear Threat and 'Stars Observed: Goodricke, Piggott and the development of Astronomy'

Implications

Financial:

13. The following table shows the implications for the Archive's budget:

	Current Budget 2008/09 £,000	Option1 2009/10 Cost £,000	Option1 Maximum Cost £,000	Option2 2009/10 Cost £,000	Option2 Maximum Cost £,000
Staffing Budget	82	114	125	117	128
Non Staffing Budget	31	31	31	31	31
Total Budget	113	145	156	148	159
Increase compared to current budget		32	43	35	46
Plus one-off payment to Trust		30		30	

*All costs shown at 2008/09 prices

14. The additional resources would be required from April 2009 and would need to be treated as a growth bid within the 2009/10 budget process.
15. This investment would restore York broadly to the position of 2006/7 when York had an available budget of £135k to spend on its archives service placing it 70th out of 92 English archives authorities in terms of net expenditure (56th out of 92 in terms of expenditure per 1,000 of population). The budget has decreased year on year since 2006/07 which would suggest that York would no longer be ranked at this level. The budget available in 2008/09 has fallen to £113k.
16. When the service was put out to tender in 2006 the cheapest bid was over £334k per annum, more than £200k in excess of the current budget. The bid also required one-off set up costs of £414k. The cheapest bid that offered city centre access was far more expensive again. Previous investigation into refurbishing the current premises estimated a cost of £1.45m at 2003 prices.
17. A capital bid has been made through the CRAM bid for the refurbishment of York Library including £0.5m for the financial year 2010/11 in respect of these proposals.

HR:

18. The post of Development Manager has been evaluated at Grade 10. The job description is attached at Annex C for information. This new post would be recruited to in line with the Council's normal procedures as would the additional post of Information Assistant (This is an existing post designation on Grade 3). The former post of City Archivist would be deleted from the establishment. Current acting up and other temporary staffing arrangements would cease.

Property:

19. When the current City Archive facility is vacated it will revert to York Museums Trust under the terms of the lease. The Trust will be able to use the space to good effect as part of their development plans for the Art Gallery. The proposal to relocate the City Archive to York Library is subject to a detailed feasibility study. (The £0.5m in year 2 of the current CRAM bid is purely indicative). Whilst it has been established that it is structurally possible to add a further wing to the York Library a detailed study will be required to establish the cost / benefit of such a scheme. A further report will need to be brought to members on this and any other property options in due course.

Other Implications:

20. There are no equalities, crime and disorder, or information technology implications immediately arising from this report.

Corporate Priorities

21. The City Archive has the potential to contribute to the corporate priority of increasing people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects.

Risk Management

22. There is a risk of a negative inspection report from The National Archives (TNA) if a solution is not found for the City Archive within a reasonable period of time. Withdrawal of TNA approved status would result in it being practically impossible to attract any external funding.

Recommendations

23. The Executive is asked to agree:
 - the proposed strategy of retaining the City Archive in-house and creating a single Archives and Local History service within the Library Service
 - the creation of two new posts in place of the former post of City Archivist:
 - Development Manager, and
 - an additional post of Information Assistant, specifying whether it should be at 0.8 fte or 1.0 fte
 - the designation of the Lord Mayor as Honorary Keeper of the City Archive
 - to create a Development Trust with a one-off start-up capital grant of £30k to support the work of the service and with responsibility for trading activity

- to initiate a project to re-locate the Archive and Local History service to the Central Library as part of existing plans to develop the Library building.
- to include the necessary additional resources set out in the report within its budget proposals to be submitted to full Council in February as part of the 2009/10 budget process

Reason: To secure a viable future for the City Archive.

Annexes

- A. Vision for the archives service
- B. Richard Taylor's report
- C. Job description for the post of Development Manager

Contact Details

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Report Approved ✓ **Date** 11.12.08.

Specialist Implications Officers:

Finance:	Property:	HR:
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Wards Affected:

All ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Scrutiny of the City of York Archives Service: Report to the Executive, 17 Jan. 2006
Future of the City Archives Service: Report to the Executive, 11 March 2008