

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 21 March 2014

Subject: Portsmouth History Centre and Archive Development

Report by: Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport of the plans for the development of Portsmouth History Centre and the Archive Service.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Library and Archive Service seeks National Archives accreditation for the service in 2015 following the relocation of the remaining archives to Southsea Library.**

The following further recommendations are required as part of the accreditation process:

- 2.2 **That the service works towards eliminating the backlog of cataloguing and delivers an online version of the catalogue for the public.**
- 2.3 **That the service develops a policy for the digital preservation and publication of resources.**
- 2.4 **That the service continues to train and develop the staff of Portsmouth History Centre to enable them to deliver a quality service.**
- 2.5 **That the service continues to recruit and develop the contribution of volunteers to the archives and the History Centre.**
- 2.6 **That the History Centre promotes access to the resources by all means including talks, displays, events workshops and publications.**
- 2.7 **That the service works towards developing a conservation programme for books and archives.**

2.8 That the service updates the acquisition and disposal for the archives to includes the book collections.

3. Background

3.1 Library Service took on responsibility for the City's Archive Service in 2013 when the Archive budget was transferred to the Library Service. A proportion of the collection was moved to the Central library and the search room facilities were offered from the second floor as Portsmouth History Centre (PHC) in 2011. This brought together the archives with the library local and naval book collections. The first floor of Southsea library will be developed during 2014 to provide safe and secure storage for the remainder of the archives currently held at the City Museum and to provide workspace for PHC staff and volunteers. Permissions and budget for this work is already agreed. The Library and Archive Service has the aspiration to increase the awareness and use of the collections by eliminating the current backlog of cataloguing and making the catalogue available online; by the digitisation of suitable material and again making this available online; and continuing to promote the collections to individuals and groups by means of events, workshops, talks and visits.

3.2 Both the Archive and Library Services are bound by legislation. In the case of the library service the main legislation is the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The most relevant legislation covering archives are the following Acts of parliament:

- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Government Act 1972 (section 224)
- Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967
- The Manorial Document Rules 1959 and Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules 1960
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992).

In addition, the National Archives' 'Standard for Records Repositories' and 'Framework of Standards', while not statutory, are key benchmarks against which record offices are assessed as part of Accreditation and in other ways.

3.3 Archive service accreditation is the UK standard for archive services. The standard defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development. It helps archive services to demonstrate their value by externally validating and accrediting achievement and supporting improvement. The standard demands that the following are in place:

- A mission statement
- That governance and management structures are in place
- That effective forward plans and planning are in place
- That the buildings and storage are physically secure and accessible
- That sufficient funds are in place to deliver the forward plans
- That the service has a suitably experienced workforce in place to carry out the service's responsibilities and plans.

- The service has a co-ordinated approach to collections management of both analogue and digital materials
- That the service has a clear policy on collections development covering the acquisition, appraisal and de-accessioning of material
- The service has a policy on collections information and specifies the actions that are being taken to enhance records and address cataloguing backlogs.
- That the service has a clear plan on collections care and conservation
- That the service has clear policies on the access to the collections by the whole community.

3.4 The provision of a quality service requires that the service is staffed by people with the relevant qualifications and experience. In the case of Portsmouth History Centre it means the employment of suitably qualified archivists and also those with relevant library experience. These should be in sufficient numbers to ensure the security of the collections, to provide assistance to users both in the centre and remotely and to deliver outreach activities and events, workshops displays and support the work of the volunteers. The skills and knowledge of the staff should be enhanced by the provision of suitable training opportunities.

3.5 The cataloguing of archives, books and other items held in the collections of Portsmouth History Centre (PHC) serve two purposes. Firstly they record the addition of the items to the collections and so provide a holdings list. In the case of books the catalogue will hold full bibliographic information and list the holdings with locations. The books within the local history, naval history, Dickens and Conan Doyle collections have been catalogued within Spydus, the library management system, and the records are available on the online catalogue. New items are added as part of the book ordering process. Work on the cataloguing of the archives is ongoing and is being done by both archivists and volunteers, building on the experience gained in cataloguing the Conan Doyle archive. The move of more of the collection to Southsea library will give the opportunity to engage with more volunteers and progress with the backlog of cataloguing. The archives catalogue is not currently available online but it is proposed to investigate the implementation of the public module of CALM, the archive software currently in use. We will also investigate the possibilities of an upgrade to the library software that could provide a search facility across the holdings of both the archive and the book collections. Potential users of the collections should be able to check that we hold the resources they need before they arrange a visit.

3.6 PHC wishes to promote the awareness and use of the collections amongst all sectors of the community. We will do this by means of talks, visits workshops and other events. We will support initiatives such as the "Lest We Forget" project to support and encourage community groups to work with archives. The links built up with Portsmouth University and the history students can be built on. We will build on the success of the 2013 Portsmouth History Fair to build links with other organisations in the Portsmouth area. We will seek to link activities to the national curriculum to encourage the use of the History centre by schools.

- 3.7** The issue of online access to records held by Portsmouth History centre is wider than the digitisation issue. The National Archives tend to use the term digital preservation to refer to "born digital" material. This report will describe digitisation in terms of both "born digital" materials and the conversion of analogue material.
- 3.8** Digitisation of suitable existing hard copy archives and local collects is an essential process in the future management and delivery of the collections for local enquiries and those who will seek to engage with the collections from other parts of the world. Digitisation of records in the collection would provide online access to virtual surrogates. This would serve two purposes. Firstly it would enable access to vulnerable original material and secondly it would make material available to users remotely. Items from the local history and naval library collections are also candidates for digitisation, particularly the local postcards and naval ship photographs. This could offer the potential to bring in some income as material could be made available online as a thumbnail or with a watermark enabling PHC to charge for "clean" copies.
- 3.9** The digitisation of the record offers considerable challenge due to the varied nature of the existing collections. The key issues can be identified as follows:
- a. Online access to the Calm Archives database.
 - b. Access to some of the indexes, e.g. parish records.
 - c. Many of the photographs and some of the library postcards have been scanned and are viewable on a PC in PHC only. At present these are not keyword searchable so indexing is required and conversion. To protect the copyright in the images they should be watermarked or protected in other ways.
 - d. PHC index to the Portsmouth News 1984 to 2010. This is currently on a single PC in PHC on an old database.
 - e. Oral History collection. An assessment of the oral histories should be undertaken to ensure that they are in a file format that will enable them to be "read" in the future.
- 3.10** Successful digital access to collections will require a number of factors to be put in place:
- a. An accessible "front end" being an introductory page which provides a single place to click on all collection holdings, delivered in a form that would enable direct, "user friendly" access.
 - b. An information management system which could accommodate the existing records, i.e. Calm and Spydus and provide opportunities for images to be included as part of the record.
 - c. Provision of volunteer support. Funding will be sought to cover costs for a volunteer supervisor post and related resources including cameras, scanners and required software. This will not be supported from existing budgets.
- 3.11** An exploration is required to consider all potential options to provide on-line digital access to all collections and offers. This should be resilient, searchable and accessible. A step change is required to consider breadth of use and changing requirements for access and engagement.

Spydus 9 is acknowledged as an option but this is yet to be implemented in terms of the History Centre model. To be ground breaking can prove expensive and there are benefit to be gained by learning from the experience of others. All opportunities should be accessed and recommendations brought in a further report, when fully evaluated.

- 3.12** PHC will also give consideration to "born digital" material. The bulk of the collection is obviously now in paper and parchment format but the majority of records, reports etc. are now created digitally and policies must be set in place to preserve these for the future. One of the major considerations, with the rapid developments in technology and software is the challenge of ensuring that records created digitally will be readable in the future. The original oral history archive was created used tape recorders and it was realised that this technology was becoming obsolete and so they were transferred to a digital medium. PHC will look to the leadership of the National Archives for guidance on the best methods for long term preservation and access. Liaison with Modern Records is also essential to ensure that when records are transferred to PHC for permanent retention they are in a form that will be accessible in the future. Guidelines can be found on the National Archives website.
- 3.13** Although the work to digitise some of the archive collection will go some way to preserving and conserving fragile paper and parchment some conservation of the collections both book and records will also be necessary. PHC staff will draw up a list of documents and books most in need of preservation and draw up a prioritised list of material to be conserved as funds allow.
- 3.14** The role of volunteers is vital to the work of PHC. Volunteers have been invaluable in supporting the care and the development of the collections. Tasks they have undertaken have included listing and indexing items from the collections, making them more accessible to researchers. They have supported the service at events and are enthusiastic advocates for the service. PHC will work to support the volunteers to ensure that both they and the service benefit from their involvement.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1** Recognition of the archive by National Archives as a suitable place of deposit is essential to secure the continuation of the archive service as a place of deposit for public records. Unless National Archives are assured that our collections are kept in safe, secure and in environmentally controlled storage and that access is adequately controlled they could recommend that the public records in our collections are removed to other organisations. This would be to the detriment of our users and potentially damage the reputation of the City Council. Obtaining archive accreditation from the national archives will raise the standing of the Library and Archive Service and may lead to the opportunity to bid for funding for development projects.

- 4.2 The backlog of cataloguing limits the use of the collections by researchers and the community. Providing a catalogue online would alert potential users to the wealth of resources available in the collection. PHC staff are already aware that people travel long distances to look at unique material in the book and archive collections. Making the catalogues and various indexes produced by staff and volunteers available online would only further increase this usage.
- 4.3 Digital preservation of parts of the collection, particularly photographs, would again increase access to the material and go a long way to reducing wear on the originals.
- 4.4 The staff are one of the most valuable resources of PHC. Without their knowledge and experience many of the users of the collection would not be made aware of the sources that would be of most benefit to their research. PHC need to invest in its staff by providing access to training offered by other institutions, particularly the National Archives.
- 4.5 The move of more of the collection to Southsea Library and the creation of the volunteer space will give the opportunity to recruit more volunteers. The various backlogs of catalogues and indexes will not be reduced without the enthusiastic input of volunteers.
- 4.6 Although one of the roles of the service is to preserve the books and archives for future generations we also wish to make them accessible to the community. As well as making more available online the aim is to continue the involvement of the community in use of the collections following on from the Lest We Forget Project.
- 4.7 PHC staff are continually assessing the state of the material in both the archive and book collections. The condition of items can restrict their use to prevent further deterioration. A list of items requiring either rebinding in the case of books, or other conservation in the case of archives will be drawn up. Work will be carried out as the budget allows and staff will actively look at opportunities for external funding.
- 4.8 New books, journals, pamphlets and maps are produced regularly that are suitable for addition to the local and naval history book collections. These will be purchased as part of the usual book purchasing for the library service. A policy will define the boundaries for these additions. The policy will also update the acquisitions and disposal policy for the records of 2005

5. **Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

- 5.1 A preliminary EIA has been completed

6. **Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Council provide its archive services pursuant to its statutory powers under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, which enables all local authorities to promote adequate use of their own records and empowers county and borough Councils ('principal councils') to acquire other records by purchase, gift or deposit.

Additionally, as an authorised place of deposit appointed by the National Archives Services under the Public Records Act 1958 for the holding of public records on its behalf.

- 6.2** The Local Government Act, 1972 section 224 requires local authorities to make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the Council and its officers. Central Government guidance advises that such "proper arrangement" should encompass the storage and preservation of documents in accordance with recognised standards and the provision of appropriate means of public access to the documents.
- 6.3** Archives contain evidence and information which can sometimes be used in legal cases and other key decision making process by the Council. Therefore, the Council need to consider the implications of any change in custodial arrangements for its records which may impact on their evidential value.
- 6.4** The Council is also bound by the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts as well as environmental Information Regulations which gives strict conditions about the management and protection of, and public access to information held by the Council.
- 6.5** Obtaining the National Archive accreditation in 2015 will ensure the Council maintaining adequate standard of care for archives, including their professional management, storage and preservation and access in compliance with the National Archives Standard for Record Repositories.

7. Finance Comments

- 7.1** There is no charge to apply for National Archives accreditation and the standards demanded will be achieved within current budgets. The forward plans and policies required will be matched to the resources available and will not require additional funding.
- 7.2** Additional costs will not be incurred as a result of the implementation of the public module of the CALM, the archive software currently in use. This module is already included as part of the current package being purchased from the supplier but has not been used to date.

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Signed by:

Stephen Baily

Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on 21 March 2014.

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport