



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **West Glamorgan Archives Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Friday, 10 September 2021 at 11.00 am

Present: Louise Fleet (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s) - Swansea

P M Black	L S Gibbard	L R Jones
J A Raynor	R V Smith	

Councillor(s) – Neath Port Talbot

A R Aubrey	R Mizen	P A Rees
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Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden	Democratic Services Officer
Kim Collis	County Archivist
Craig Griffiths	Head of Legal - NPT
Wayne John	County Librarian - NPT

Apologies for Absence

A Dulley, Dr L Miskell, S Perons and J Watkins

6 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by both Authorities, no interests were declared.

7 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the West Glamorgan Archives Committee meeting held on 11 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

8 Matters Arising.

The County Archivist reported that a staffing report was in the process of approval which would lead to the creation of a new more generic post of Archives Assistant. He would update the Committee further at the next meeting.

He also outlined for information that the blue plaque unveiling for Jessie Donaldson had taken place on the 19th June, re-iterating that the blue plaque scheme is a Cultural Services initiative not one controlled by the Archive Service.

9 Report of the County Archivist.

The County Archivist presented a report which outlined the work of the Joint Archive Service during the period June 2021 – August 2021.

Archive Service Accreditation

He verbally updated the Committee on the current situation relating to the Archives Accreditation Standard and outlined that a further review of Accredited status would take place in November.

He indicated he would need to prepare a report in October and submit this prior to the Panel Review. He outlined the background history to the Accreditation which the Service achieved in 2016 and referred to the main reason for the Service being placed at Provisional status, which relates to the uncertain future for the archive collections consequent on Swansea Council's decision to sell off its Civic Centre. Other factors requiring improvement were a coherent plan for the preservation of digital records and greater access to conservation advice.

He detailed that the Archive Service has recently subscribed to the National Conservation Service, which provides the strategic conservation advice which was seen as a gap by the Reviewing Panel.

He outlined the potential reputational loss for the two Councils and the Archive Service, should the Service lose its Accreditation Standard and the implications for its designation as a local Place of Deposit for public records.

Covid-19

He outlined that the Family History Centre had reopened on 27 July. He indicated that visitor numbers remain low, most likely due to a lack of confidence amongst the core user base, who are mostly in an older age range, to venture back to use public facilities when they don't need to.

Social distancing measures remain in place both there and in the main archives search room and a strict cleaning regime is also in place.

He indicated that he needs to restart discussions with the Neath Antiquarian Society regarding the potential for re-opening the Neath Mechanics Institute to the public.

Potential Relocation of the Archives Service to the Proposed City Centre Hub

He updated Committee on the developments since the last meeting on the proposals for the potential relocation of the service to the new City Centre Hub in the former British Home Stores building in the city centre.

He outlined that the new facility would need to achieve the BS EN 16893 standard. Any funding from Welsh Government towards a new archives facility would be dependent on this standard being achieved.

He indicated that the current proposals were to locate the archive strongroom on the second floor of the building and above the library space. He indicated that he didn't

feel that this would be suitable and outlined his concerns relating to the issues around the potential fire risk/water damage from its proposed location, poor thermal modelling reports and energy sustainability going forward and shared ownership of the site with a retail outlet.

He indicated that fellow archive professionals in Welsh Government and at The National Archives shared his concerns due to the risk factors raised above and that there was a lack of a set of detailed risk assessments, for fire, security, energy use and overall integrity of the building structure.

The Chair and members of the Committee thanked the County Archivist for his update and discussed at length the issues and potential risks raised above, and stated they would need a briefing at the earliest opportunity with the relevant officers/project managers/designers etc to fully discuss the concerns and issues raised above. The possibility of a site visit was also discussed. They also requested further information on the new archives facility that has been built in Carmarthen.

Agreed that

1. the County Archivist convene a briefing for all committee members as soon as is practicable as outlined above, and that a site visit be arranged if required.
2. further information on the new Carmarthen facility be provided to the next meeting.

Outreach and Educational Work

He indicated that due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic and the traditionally quiet school holiday period, no outreach work had taken place during the reporting period, beyond the regular postings on social media.

The project on the history of Wales' connection with the slave trade remains ongoing.

Use of the Service

He indicated that the figures relating the use of the service reflect the effect of the pandemic.

Talks and Professional Meetings

He reported on the various meetings attended by staff during the quarter.

Archive Collections

He reported on the list of archives received by the Service during the quarter.

The meeting ended at 12.10 pm

Chair