



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **West Glamorgan Archives Committee**

Committee Room 1/2 Civic Centre, Port Talbot/Remotely via
Microsoft Teams

Friday, 15 September 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Louise Fleet (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s) - Swansea

P M Black

L R Jones

R V Smith

Councillor(s) – Neath Port Talbot

W Carpenter

R Mizen

C Phillips

N Jenkins

Associated Organisations

Andrew Dulley

Diocese of Swansea & Brecon

Janet Watkins

Neath Antiquarian Society

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden

Democratic Services Officer

Kim Collis

County Archivist

Clare Davies

Library Services Manager - NPT

Apologies for Absence

Councillors E J King and Renkes and T McNulty & C Saunders

6 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by both Authorities, the following interest was declared:

Andrew Dulley – Item 4 – personal.

7 Election of Vice Chairs for the Municipal Year 2023-2024.

Resolved that Councillors R V Smith and C Phillips be elected Vice – Chairs of the Committee for 2023-2024.

8 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the West Glamorgan Archives Committee meeting held on 16 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

9 Matters Arising

The County Archivist reported that unfortunately the launch of the Wales Broadcast Archive had been further delayed for various issues.

He outlined that the likely launch date will now be in October, and the Clip Corner situated in the Archive Service in the Civic Centre, Swansea is likely open at the same time as the facility in the South Wales Miners Library in Swansea University.

10 Report of the County Archivist.

The County Archivist presented a report which outlined the work of the Joint Archive Service during the period June - August 2023.

Use of the Service

He reported on the figures relating the use of the service via its various platforms both in person and online. The factors around this had been discussed and debated at many previous meetings.

Staff

He reported that since the last meeting Anne-Marie Gay had been promoted to the part time Archivist post and Peter Neville had been appointed to the part-time Archive Assistant position.

The service is looking to recruit a further Archive Assistant which bring the service back up to a full complement of staff and enable the lunchtime re-opening in Swansea and the two day a week opening in Neath. This will return the opening hours of the service to 46 hours from 36 per week.

He outlined that online access to the 1921 Census will shortly be provided at the Mechanics Institute in Neath as well as in the searchroom in Swansea.

Outreach and Educational Activity

Staff delivered an educational session to one school during the quarter.

Monthly sessions were also held with the Glamorgan Family History Society Swansea Branch who now meet regularly in the Family History Centre.

Grant Awards Relating to the Move

He outlined that preparation continues towards the 14-point removal plan agreed with Welsh Government and the external advisor from the National Conservation Service.

He detailed the work ongoing in the 8 main areas that Archives staff are pursuing in preparation for the move, including increased environmental monitoring; pest monitoring; carrying out a preservation assessment survey; improving the storage of the audio and film collections; and digitisation of the glass slide collections.

He outlined the grants from Welsh Government that the service has received towards the achievement of certain elements of the work.

Relocation of the Archives to the City Centre Hub

He outlined that work continues on the design of the new archive storage area in the City Centre Hub towards achieving BS 4971 standard, which has recently been given the name "Y Storfa".

RIBA Stage 4 has now been passed, but a number of revisions have been made to the project since the last meeting following a value engineering exercise, which is standard practice on large schemes now to look at inflationary pressures, building costs etc.

A number of proposals and modifications to the original scheme resulting from the exercise are still being considered and evaluated by both Welsh Government and the National Archives. The process of dialogue and clarification on the revisions is ongoing currently between the contractors and the two bodies above.

The main revisions are that the searchroom has been relocated to the first floor and a staff lift would be used to transfer documents between the searchroom and strongroom. A strategy to overcome any issues with this is currently being developed and isn't anticipated to cause any operational problems.

The other main change is that the plenum or cavity around the strongroom, which was planned to be cooled/heated as necessary has been removed. Direct intervention in the strongroom via air conditioning is now planned. He outlined both his concerns and those of the expert from the National Conservation Service regarding these proposals, particularly an issue relating to humidity control, which it is proposed would be manually controlled.

The opinion of the expert from National Conservation Service on this revision was related to the committee. He outlined that the decision on the proposed revisions would ultimately be for Welsh Government and the National Archives and not the service, and that decisions made now may affect our re-application for full Accreditation.

The Chair and Members asked questions and made comments around the revised proposals and outlined their concerns relating to the issues raised around the integrity of strongroom and its potential implications on the accreditation for the service going forward.

He outlined that the feasibility study for a new regional archives facility as discussed in previous meetings has now been finalised and will be presented shortly to the City Regeneration Team initially, who are the body that commissioned the work. The study will hopefully be available for the committee to view in the future.

Professional Meetings and Training

He outlined the various professional groups and meetings that he had attended during the quarter.

Accessions of Archive Collections

The County Archivist detailed the various archives received by the Service during the quarter. He reported that the discovery of a mortuary file dating from the time of the Second World War and the Blitz on Swansea had been featured in a recent Wales Online article.

The meeting ended at 10.51 am

Chair