



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **West Glamorgan Archives Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Friday, 12 March 2021 at 11.00 am

Present: Louise Fleet (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s) - Swansea

P M Black

L R Jones

R V Smith

Councillor(s) – Neath Port Talbot

A R Aubrey

W F Griffiths

H N James

R Mizen

P A Rees

Associated Organisations

Andrew Dulley

Diocese of Swansea & Brecon

Sarah Perons

Diocese of Llandaff

Officer(s)

G Borsden

Democratic Services Officer

K Collis

County Archivist

C Griffiths

Head of Legal - NPT

W John

County Librarian - NPT

Apologies for Absence

Councillors M Durke and L S Gibbard, Dr L Miskell & T McNulty

24 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

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

25 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the West Glamorgan Archives Committee meeting held on 11 December 2020 be approved as a correct record

26 2021/2022 Revenue Budget.

Kim Collis presented the report of the Director of Place which gave details of the Joint Archive Service Revenue Budget for 2021/2022 and the reserves held by the Joint Archive Service, which was submitted for information only.

He indicated that it was again a virtual standstill budget, other for than a small uplift for living wage increases.

The table in the report showed the estimated position of the Archive reserves as at 31 March 2021. This had risen by £30,000 during the year due to an underspend in budget linked to the pandemic.

Discussion took place around the use of the reserves and the potential re-introduction of the publications fund should the need arise.

He outlined that the Archives trainee remains unfilled due to recruitment issues and detailed the increase to other staff hours to ensure service continuity.

Members noted the report.

27 Report of the County Archivist.

The County Archivist presented a report which outlined the work of the Joint Archive Service during the period December 2020 – February 2021.

Fees and Charges

Kim Collis referred to the table of fees and charges for the Service which remain unchanged from 2020 and will apply from 1 April 2021.

Members of the committee noted the levels of fees & charges and supported the freezing of charges given the wider economic context.

COVID-19 Pandemic

He outlined that the service had reopened to the public on a much reduced capacity last year, with social distancing measures in place, prior to the latest national lockdown on December 19.

He detailed that staff continue as a rule to work from home, whilst maintaining regular physical visits to the civic centre, to ensure the strongroom is checked and mail is collected and any necessary work and document retrieval for council staff is undertaken.

He indicated that the future use and provision of the service will depend a lot on the confidence of both volunteers and users to return to “normal” and visit the facilities in person.

Outreach and Educational Activity

He detailed the various pieces of work that the service had been involved with on the “Commemorating the Three Nights’ Blitz” which had its 80th anniversary between 18-21 February 2021 which included the publishing online of a memorial which contains 392 names, with information about where they are buried and how to find out more information. A separate section of the memorial includes the names of the 26 people who died in the Neath Port Talbot area. The memorial is on the Archive Service website at www.swansea.gov.uk/article/60957.

He outlined that, on the same date last year, the Service had published a reprint of the 1994 work by Dr John Alban entitled *The Three Nights' Blitz*. On 19 February, Dr Alban gave an online talk about Swansea's air raids on behalf of the Archive Service. 176 people attended the live event and a large amount of positive feedback was received. An audio recording of the talk was made and has been uploaded to social media, this had been shared over 100 times and had in excess of 2,000 hits.

Two films were also produced by the Archive Service and posted on social media to tell the story of the Blitz from different perspectives. The first is based on a narration of the war diary of James R. John, a local journalist and Home Guard member, and the second uses photographs from the collections to depict the effect of the blitz on the town. There are Welsh and English versions of both films. The first has been viewed in excess of 2,600 times in total while the second has been viewed over 13,100 times. The two films and Dr Alban's talk can be accessed on the Archive Service website at www.swansea.gov.uk/article/61448.

The commemorations were publicised widely, including on our social media and in the press. There was a feature on the BBC Wales website (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-56082255>) and in the *South Wales Evening Post*.

He also outlined that additional teaching resources relating to the Blitz had been added to the online provision and is mainly aimed at KS2 & KS3 pupils.

He further outlined the ongoing work to Wales' connection with the Slave Trade, which has developed into a pan Wales project with contributions from archive services across the country and the National Library.

He indicated that the proposal and idea had also developed into two modules, the first looking at the slave trade, with the second looking at the growth of diverse communities in the South Wales coal ports in the Victorian era.

He referred and outlined his assistance in proposals for the unveiling of a Swansea Council blue plaque to the anti-slavery campaigner and activist, Jessie Donaldson 1799-1889, which is planned for a virtual unveiling on 25 March. The day is significant as the UN Day of Commemoration for the victims of the historic slave trade. The event will be filmed and made available on the UWTSD YouTube channel. He indicated would circulate the link of the recording to members of the committee when available.

Former British Home Stores Building

He outlined that an opportunity has arisen for consideration of 275-277 Oxford Street Swansea, the former British Home Stores building, for conversion into a future archive repository, searchroom and Family History Centre. This would be alongside other uses for the building which would include a new Swansea Central Library and a Community Hub.

He stated that funding has been granted for an assessment by a multi-disciplinary team of the potential conversion of this building. Major considerations for the

Archives are whether the building has the potential to meet the British Standard 16893:2018 for archival storage and whether the conversion makes economic sense compared to the cost of an alternative solution such as a new-build. Welsh Government and the National Archives are providing advice and guidance throughout the process and at the suggestion of Welsh Government, the service has taken out a subscription to the National Conservation Service in order to help provide some of the specialised advice needed on the collections' conservation needs. Members welcomed the potential for the development of a new city centre based facility for the service.

Staff

He outlined that the Family History Centre Supervisor Lorna Crook left the Service on 5 December to take up employment with the NHS. She was a well-respected colleague and one very popular with family history users in both our Swansea and Neath service points. The post currently remains vacant.

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, in particular the collection acquired by the service from a collector of seven illuminated addresses presented at various times to Sir Henry Hussey Vivian between 1876 and 1893 by various Swansea groups and organisations, including one recording the grant of honorary freedom of the town to him.

Use of the Service

He reported on the use of the Service for the quarter and detailed the background and rationale behind the quarterly statistics.

He indicated that he expected the attendance figures for the next quarter to be considerably down due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting ended at 12.14 pm

Chair