

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting – 17 September 2018

Report Title

Archives Accreditation – Policy Approval

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Damien Wilson, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All wards

Summary

As a recognised Place of Deposit under the Public Records Act 1958, Rotherham Archives and Local Studies is required to submit an application under the Archives Accreditation Scheme. This scheme is the UK standard for archive services maintained by The National Archives and defines good practice and supports the ongoing development of archive services across the country.

The scheme covers three areas; organisational health, collections, stakeholders and their experiences and requires the submission of an online application along with supporting documentation including a Forward Plan and key policy documents.

A successful application would be essential not only for members of the public but also for future funders and partners, who can have confidence in the delivery of this Service.

Recommendations

1. That the Heritage Service's Forward Plan (2018-2022) and key policy documents to support the Council's application for Archives Accreditation be approved.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 Heritage Services Forward Plan, 2018-2022
- Appendix 2 Collections Development Policy
- Appendix 3 Collections Information Policy
- Appendix 4 Care and Conservation Policy
- Appendix 5 Access Policy

Background Papers

Archive Service Accreditation Standard

(<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-standard-june-2018.pdf>)

Archive Service Accreditation Guidance

(<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-guidance-june-2018.pdf>)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 17 September 2018

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Archives Accreditation – Policy Approval

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Heritage Service's Forward Plan (2018-2022) and key policy documents to support the Council's application for Archives Accreditation be approved.

2. Background

- 2.1 Rotherham Archives and Local Studies was established in 1986 following the abolition of the South Yorkshire County Record Office to preserve records of all aspects of life within Rotherham Metropolitan Borough and to make them accessible for use by members of the public. Prior to this date, archives and local studies material was collected by Rotherham Libraries since at least the 1930s. The Service now holds more than 1,000 separate archive collections in a variety of formats. They document the borough's diverse history and culture from the 13th century to the present day and include the archives of people, organisations, local authorities and businesses in the Rotherham Borough reflecting the changing landscape, communities and economy.
- 2.2 Revenue expenditure per 1000 population (£405) is lower than average when compared to other similar English local authority size services (CIPFA Archive Services Data, 2016-17), which are defined as 'small'. During 2017/18, nearly 1,900 researchers visited the searchroom, staff dealt with nearly 900 remote enquiries and retrieved over 19,000 archive documents and local studies items for consultation and use. Onsite visits were slightly lower than the national average, whereas the number of retrievals and attendance at exhibitions and events was above average (with over 6,800 people visiting during 2017/18).
- 2.3 Enquiries (either onsite or remotely) cover a variety of topics and the most frequent reason is to undertake family history research, although this is declining. Other common reasons include military research; formal education research; work in connection with employment; local history research and academic research. This is comparable to UK data except for military research, which is significantly higher in Rotherham. Rotherham Archives and Local Studies can be important for providing evidential information for legal purposes.
- 2.4 The Archive Accreditation Scheme is the UK standard for archive services and is maintained by The National Archives (non-ministerial government department and the official archive of the UK Government for England and Wales). The standard defines good practice and agreed standards and supports the ongoing development of archive services.
- 2.5 The scheme provides reassurance that standards are being maintained by Archive Services approved as Places of Deposit. Places of Deposit for public records are appointed by The National Archives to hold specific record classes under section 4.1 of the Public Records Act 1958. Rotherham Archives and Local Studies was re-appointed as a Place of Deposit in October 2015.

- 2.6 The standard looks at an organisation's ability to develop, care for and provide access to its collections and those areas such as resources and planning, which underpin those activities.
- 2.7 The scheme was launched in 2013 and replaced the Standard for Record Repositories and the archive self-assessment programme with the first awards being made in late 2014.
- 2.8 The standard is made up of three sections:
- Organisational Health
 - Collections
 - Stakeholders and their Experiences

Each section is then broken down into three further requirements which are as follows:

- Policies; describing overall intentions and direction of an organisation as formally expressed by management.
 - Plans; forward looking documents that set out the objectives of the organisation and identify the actions needed to achieve these objectives, in line with the organisation's policies and in order to deliver its mission.
 - Procedures; describing a way to carry out an activity or a process in order to deliver a particular output or outcome.
- 2.9 Assessments are undertaken by trained assessors from the home nation assessor body i.e. The National Archives (England) and their recommendation is made to the Archive Service Accreditation Panel. This panel will then either award a full or provisional status (lasting two years) or reject the application.
- 2.10 Once an Archive Service has been accredited, it will be required to complete a review stage, three years after the initial award. This is to demonstrate i) progress against any actions or required improvements outlined in their feedback from their initial application; ii) any other development in the Archive Service since the award of accreditation.
- 2.11 Within the region, the following Services have received Accreditation:
- Sheffield City Archives (November 2015)
 - West Yorkshire Archive Service (July 2017)
 - Barnsley Archives (November 2017)
 - North Yorkshire County Record (November 2017)
 - Explore York (November 2017)

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council's application for Archives Accreditation is scheduled to be discussed at the Archive Service Accreditation Panel meeting on 21 November 2018.

3.2 Further clarification and guidance from The National Archives has confirmed the Forward Plan and supporting policies should be approved by 'an appropriate delegated authority'.

3.3 Supporting policies are attached as Appendices 1-5. These include:

- Heritage Service Forward Plan 2018-22, which sets out the core purpose and vision for the Service and includes a detailed action plan
- Collections development policy, which examines the background and history to Rotherham Archives and Local Studies; the profile and scope of the collections identifying current limitations; priorities for future collections development and the Service's approach to appraisal and disposal
- Collections information policy, which documents Rotherham Archives and Local Studies' approach to maintaining and providing accurate documentation of collections
- Care and Conservation Policy, which covers the Service's strategic approach to conservation including the principles of collections care; ethics, legislation and standards; premises and storage; conservation assessment and treatment; environmental monitoring and control; housekeeping; access; training; security; emergency planning; and environmental awareness
- Access Policy, which details Rotherham Archives and Local Studies' approach to access (physical and intellectual, onsite, remote and through wider engagement) to the collections under its care

3.4 Consideration must also be given to the following, which clearly demonstrate the impact and benefit of achieving the Archive Accreditation award for Rotherham:

- offers a benchmark for gauging performance, recognising achievement, driving improvement within the archives sector for the benefit of the public, whilst demonstrating quality services;
- raises the profile of Rotherham Archives and Local Studies both internally and externally through increased awareness and understanding, which is critical for future funders;
- will help the service adapt and respond to community needs and interests supporting the place shaping agenda and ambition to become a child centred borough;
- will support critical funding bids ensuring funding organisations will have confidence in the delivery of services;
- will encourage more partnership working and will support the work of the South Yorkshire Archives Partnership to examine how best to deliver services.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 Option 1 is to submit the application, with approval of the Heritage Service's Forward Plan and key policy documents (see Appendices 1-5). This is the recommended proposal.

- 4.2 Option 2 is to submit the application without approval of the Heritage Service's Forward Plan and key policy documents. Although the application may be approved, it will either be on a provisional basis or will be identified as an area of improvement and the key documents will still require approval at a later time.
- 4.3 Option 3 is not to submit the application. This will be challenged by The National Archives given that Rotherham Archives and Local Studies is a recognised Place of Deposit. This will result in the removal of the Place of Deposit status and the public records that the Council holds will need to be transferred to The National Archives at Kew. This would be at a significant cost to the Council and vital archives (relating to key bodies in the local area such as Magistrates Court; Coroner's Court; NHS) would be removed out of the region.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Whilst there is no requirement for Rotherham Archives and Local Studies to formally consult on the Forward Plan, this document has been discussed internally with Senior Managers and updated to reflect feedback.
- 5.2 Appendix 2 (Collections Development Policy) has been distributed for comment to the three other Archive Services in South Yorkshire to ensure that collections are developed strategically, whilst avoiding duplication.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The accreditation application will be submitted to be considered at the Archive Service Accreditation Panel meeting on 21 November 2018.
- 6.2 The National Archives anticipates that the outcome from the panel will be communicated to Archive Services within one week of the meeting.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The Forward Plan and supporting policies are based on existing budgets and the Accreditation Scheme takes into account the size of the returning organisation. This minimises any impact on budgets unless an area of improvement requires a level of investment. It is not expected that this will be the case following this application, should this be the case a further report will be submitted.
- 7.2 There are no known procurement implications associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 None.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 As outlined within the Service's Forward Plan, Rotherham's heritage and its stories provide significant and meaningful opportunities to enable it to become one of the most child-friendly museum and heritage services in the UK.
- 10.2 The Commitment within the Forward Plan also clearly states the Service will place children and young people at the heart of what it does to shape and drive forward these opportunities.
- 10.3 The Forward Plan outlines six strategic aims that the Service will deliver on, with three specifically focussing on children and young people. These are:
- Strategic Aim 1: Explore and shape the future direction of the Service with children and young people.
 - Strategic Aim 2: Implement a strong programme-led approach ensuring children and young people play a key role.
 - Strategic Aim 3: Create a framework for engagement, interaction and involvement for children and young people and their families, carers and other adults involved.
- 10.4 The key policy documents, where relevant, also support this direction of travel.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The Forward Plan also supports a more proactive approach to engagement with sectors of the community who have 'protected interests'. Examples of current projects include:
- 'Great Place' pilot, a scheme announced as part of the Culture White Paper in 2016. This project aims to reach out to deprived communities, particularly children and young people across Rotherham and Barnsley Boroughs transforming how people understand where their communities have come from. Archives play a critical role within this, alongside the historical landscape that has developed over the centuries;
 - Delivery of Discovery course in partnership with the University of Sheffield to inspire adults with their learning, particularly if they have not attended university. The course is innovative in its approach as the sessions feature discussion stimulated by objects and archives – these may be of personal significance to participants, or items from the museum and archive collections;
 - Potential project called Place Makers, Future Shapers (currently awaiting a decision from the Heritage Lottery Fund) focusing on a key heritage site in Rotherham (Clifton Park and Museum). This project is supported by the Different But Equal Board and in partnership with the Families, Children and Young People's Consortium and will enable children and young people (15-25 year olds from four key central Rotherham wards) to explore the history and development of local communities surrounding the site and will develop new narratives through their eyes, who will interpret and

present this heritage to their contemporary communities, particularly other young people.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 There are no immediate implications for partners and other directorates. Consideration will be given to developing beneficial partnerships to support the delivery of the Forward Plan.
- 12.2 Involvement in key partnerships will also continue and will be strengthened through the Archives Accreditation application owing to a greater level of clarity around the Service's direction of travel and its priorities.
- 12.3 This work directly supports the overall ambition of the Rotherham Plan to create a borough that is better for everyone who want to live, work, invest or visit, as well as supporting the delivery of key game changers by building stronger communities and creating a place to be proud of.
- 12.4 It also supports the delivery of the Council Plan with a strong focus on 'Every child making the best start in life' and 'A strong community in a clean, safe environment' and through the delivery of the emerging Cultural Strategy with a strong focus on strengthening the distinctive identity of the Borough; encouraging active engagement and participation and to optimise the impact on cross-cutting themes and priorities, such as health and wellbeing, place-making and the ambition to become a child-centred Borough.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Failure to achieve Archives Accreditation would effectively mean that the Archive Service would not be recognised as meeting UK standards. This would lead to the loss of the Service's Place of Deposit status requiring all public records to be transferred to The National Archives at Kew, at a direct cost to the Council.
- 13.2 This would also impact on the Archive Service's ability to apply for grants in the future as generally, accreditation makes up part of the eligibility criteria.
- 13.3 Depositors including those organisations with public records, along with members of the public will experience a loss of confidence in Rotherham Archives and Local Studies and may lead to collections either being withdrawn (at a cost to the Council) or will not deposit archives in the future. This will create gaps within Rotherham's collections impacting on their evidential value.
- 13.4 All of the above will lead to the loss of reputation for the Service and in turn the Council.
- 13.5 Following a submission, the application will be considered by the Archive Service Accreditation Panel. It is anticipated the application would be successful with a full or provisional award as the Service is able to meet the essential areas of requirement. If the award is provisional, Rotherham Archives and Local Studies will be given two years to act on any identified areas for improvement.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Polly Hamilton – Assistant Director – Culture, Sport and Tourism
Lisa Broadest, Manager – Heritage Services

Approvals Obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services	Fiona Earl	18.07.2018
Assistant Director of Legal Services	Ian Gledhill	12.07.2018
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	Karen Middlebrook	17.07.2018
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	

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