

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 20 January 2025

Report Title

Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collections Policy Renewal

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report sets out the updated Collections Management and Access Policy for the Rotherham Archives and Local Studies. As a recognised Place of Deposit under the Public Records Act 1958, Rotherham Archives and Local Studies is required to resubmit 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.

A successful Archives Accreditation application is 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 Cabinet approve the Archives and Local Studies Collections Management Policy 2024 (Appendix 1).
2. That Cabinet approve the delegation to the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social

Inclusion for any future minor or legislative changes to the Collections Policy. Should a full update to the policy be required it will return to Cabinet for approval,

3. That Cabinet approve an annual closure week in March and September to enable the service to undertake important and necessary administrative collections management work.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collection Management and Access Policy

Appendix 2a Equality Analysis Part A

Appendix 2b Equality Analysis Part B

Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

Cabinet Report on Rotherham Museums, Arts & Heritage Collections Management Policy 23 January 2023

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collections Policy Renewal

1. Background

1.1 Strategic Context

1.1.1 Throughout 2018 partners from across the culture, voluntary and community sectors came together to collectively develop a new Cultural Strategy for Rotherham, which was adopted by a number of organisations, including Rotherham Council in June 2019. The Strategy covers the period from 2019 – 2026, sets out seven game-changers for transforming the cultural landscape of Rotherham, three of which underpin the development of the Collections Management Policy:

- Vital Neighbourhoods - focusing on ensuring that services, venues and programmes are truly representative of Rotherham's communities and enabling access to high-quality cultural provision locally.
- A Vibrant Heart – developing a rich and diverse cultural offer in the Town Centre including Clifton Park Museum.
- Passion to Profession – enabling engagement opportunities which build confidence and skills for life and work.

1.1.2 The Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy 2025 - 2028 aims to deliver against these objectives through the provision of access to collections at Clifton Park Museum and the creation of a collection which seeks to ensure appropriate representation and inclusion of the diverse range of communities in Rotherham.

1.1.3 Rotherham's joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2025 sets out four strategic aims which include:

- All children get the best start in life and go on to achieve their potential
- All Rotherham people enjoy the best possible mental health and wellbeing and have a good quality of life
- All Rotherham people live well for longer
- All Rotherham people live in healthy, safe and resilient communities

1.1.4 The Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy 2025 - 2028 will support the achievement of these aims through ensuring that the Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collection, is well managed, appropriately maintained and accessible to be viewed by a wider range of communities both in the Archives and Local Studies Search Room at Clifton Park Museum and as remote research enquiries. The archive collections will also be available through exhibitions at Clifton Park Museum and through engagement work in community settings delivered by the Museum Learning and Audience Development Team.

1.2 Rotherham Archives and Local Studies

- 1.2.1 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.
- 1.2.2 Rotherham Archives and Local Studies is part of Rotherham Museums, Arts and Heritage. Alongside the care of the statutory Rotherham Archives and local Studies Collection, the Rotherham Museums, Arts & Heritage service manages Clifton Park Museum and Boston Castle, as well as five heritage sites across the Borough which are: Keppel's Column, Catcliffe Glass Cone, Rockingham Waterloo Kiln, Payne Mausoleum and Walker Mausoleum. It is also the caretaker of the Rotherham York & Lancaster Regimental Collection on behalf of the sole trustee, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 1.2.3 Rotherham Archives and Local Studies was successful with its application for Archives Accreditation in 2019. A mid-term review in 2022 demonstrated the service's progress on recommendations identified within the application. The Service is due to reapply for Archives Accreditation in March 2025.
- 1.2.4 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.
- 1.2.5 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.
- 1.2.6 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. Key Issues

2.1 Archives and Local Studies Collection Management and Access Policy

2.1.1 The Archive Service Accreditation Standard is made up of three Sections - Organisational Health, Collections and Stakeholders and their experiences. The Archives and Local Studies Collection Management and Access Policy demonstrates the Service's co-ordinated approach to collections management activity, guided by coherent policies, plans and procedures. It also demonstrates how it makes material accessible to communities.

2.1.2 The Archives and Local Studies Collection Policies were last approved in 2018 for the last Archives Accreditation application. An interim update was done in 2022 and was approved by the Museums, Arts and Heritage Manager. However, approval by Cabinet is required for the next full Archive Accreditation return. Following January 2023 Cabinet, the policies were published as four individual policies:

- 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.

2.1.3 The new Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy rationalises these four policies creating a single Collections Management and Access Policy which covers the above requirements and takes on board the areas for improvement recommended in the recent Museum Collection Audit. It will also include a further four policies, which operated previously as procedural guidelines but are more appropriate to become part of the consolidated Collections Management and Access Policy. These include:

- Cataloguing Policy, which describes the Service's recently agreed approach and principles to cataloguing, ensuring the use of resources are maximised.
- Digital Preservation Policy, which sets out the approach to acquisition, appraisal and disposal, storage and maintenance of digital and digitised collections.

- Digitisation Policy, which identifies the Service's key principles, priorities and selection criteria for digitisation, approach to preservation ensuring these records remain accessible in the future.
- Reprographics Policy, which sets out how the Service provides copies of material, whilst maintaining a balance between the reprographic requirements of the users with the long-term preservation of collections.

2.2 **Archives and Local Studies Closure periods**

- 2.2.1 To implement the Archives Collection Management policy, the Service requires two annual closure weeks spaced throughout the year. The closure weeks enable the staff team to focus on undertaking important and necessary back of house collections management work including stocktaking and cataloguing. This involves closing the Archives and Local Studies Search Room at Clifton Park Museum to the public and pausing the remote enquiry service for the two weeks. The proposed weeks would be in March and September each year.
- 2.2.2 This is standard practice within Archive Services nationally and provides long term benefits to the public as it further enhances access to the collections. Enquiries received by post, email and telephone are logged and monitored and any closure is publicised well in advance to customers.

3. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 **Do Nothing**

- 3.1.1 The current collections policies were adopted in 2019 as part of Archives Accreditation. They have not been updated in light of the current guidance for Archives Accreditation or the changes to the Service in terms of its refreshed mission and stronger focus on community engagement and participation.
- 3.1.2 To 'Do Nothing' would risk the loss of Archives Accreditation as the policies would not be fit for purpose. This would have a negative impact on the reputation of Rotherham Archives and Local Studies and limit the service's ability to apply for external funding from The National Archives and National Lottery Heritage fund.

3.2 **Adopt the Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy**

- 3.2.1 The Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy appropriately reflects the current mission and values of the Museums, Arts & Heritage service and its commitment to ensuring community voice and influence within its activities.
- 3.2.2 The draft policy responds to and implements the recommendations from the recent Internal Audit of the Museum Collection and ensures that plans are in place for the safe and appropriate care of collections for future generations.

3.2.3 The Policy will enable the service to retain its Archives Accreditation. Not retaining the Archives Accreditation standard could affect Rotherham Archives and Local Studies status as a Place of Deposit. This would mean that 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.

3.2.4 This is the recommended option.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 In developing the Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy, consultation has taken place with The National Archives to ensure appropriate content and best practice.

4.2 Consultation and benchmarking has taken place with the South Yorkshire Archives Partnership to ensure that the policy is in line with best practice regionally and nationally.

4.3 Consultation has also taken place with the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhoods

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The Archives Collections Management Policy is being presented for adoption by Cabinet on 20th January 2025. Should the policy be approved, it will be adopted with immediate effect, subject to call-in procedures.

5.2 The Head of Creative Programming and Engagement and the Museums, Arts & Heritage Manager will have overall accountability for the implementation of the policy and the supporting Archives Collections Management Plan working closely with the Archives and Local Studies team within the service.

5.3 The deadline for the next Archives Accreditation return is 8 March 2025.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The cost of the development of these policies has been contained within the approved revenue budget for the Archives and Local Studies Service. Grant funding is being provided, through the Children's Capital of Culture approved revenue budget, to support two archive trainees to develop a specific archive for the Children's Capital of Culture project. By having a compliant Archives Collections Management Policy, the Service can better avail itself of funding opportunities from within the wider sector.

6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Archives and Local Studies Collection is accessible to the public in the Archives Search Room. It also forms part of the foundation for the outreach, engagement and learning activities across the Museums, Arts & Heritage Service and is used for all exhibitions and associated programmes at Clifton Park Museum. Without the Archives and Local Studies Collection these programmes would not offer the same level of high-quality experience, which supports education and learning, health and wellbeing, community cohesion and civic pride in museums, schools, care homes and community settings.

9.2 As Rotherham prepares to become the world's first Children's Capital of Culture in 2025, the Museums, Arts and Heritage Service is working to ensure that the voice and influence of children and young people is prevalent in its collections and programmes. The Archives and Local Studies team have Archives trainee roles in 2024 and 2025 to develop the archive for Children's Capital of Culture and identify cataloguing priorities for collections most relevant to children and young people.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 An Equalities Impact Screening, Assessment and Action Plan can be found at Appendix 2.

10.2 The Museums, Arts & Heritage Service has undertaken extensive service transformation over the last five years which has included a number of research activities and pilot programmes with targeted groups to better understand their current levels of participation and engagement, representation within the collection and exhibitions, and barriers that prevent greater levels of engagement. Through these carefully co-produced programmes the Service has begun to see a change in its audience profile with more communities from Global Majority backgrounds engaging, as well as a growth in engagement from children and young people.

10.3 These programmes have enabled the service to test new models of co-production and co-creation, building greater voice and influence for communities which guide the activities of the Service, including its management of collections. An example of how the Service has co-produced with communities is in relation to language. Through consultation, the Service has reviewed language related to equalities and worked with

residents to identify preferred terms when referring to “BAME” communities, such as “Global Majority” in order to more accurately represent ethnicity within the work of the Service. For clarity and consistency with Council terminology, both terms are used within the Equalities Assessment and Action Plan.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment can be found at Appendix 3.
- 11.2 The key implication for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change is related to the storage of the collection at Bailey House. Consideration is also given to the storage of born-digital and digitised collections to ensure digital storage is utilised effectively to reduce cloud carbon emissions.
- 11.3 In addition, a Decarbonisation report has been carried out on Bailey House, which included a review on heating systems, and identifying emission improvements including insulation in the building.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no direct implications for partners as the policy relates only to those collections wholly owned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 12.2 Involvement in key partnerships will also continue and will be strengthened through the adoption of the policy.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Lack of sustainable funding model for the Service.
 - 13.1.1 Through the adoption of the Archives and Local Studies Collections Management and Access Policy the Service is enabled to secure Archives Accreditation. This would then support further financial investment through grants from funders such as The National Archives and National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 13.2 Inappropriate storage for museum collection
 - 13.2.1 The Archives Collections Management and Access Policy enables the Service to continue the process of auditing and rationalising collections to improve storage conditions at Bailey House.
- 13.3 Lack of inclusion within and access to the collection
 - 13.3.1 The Museums, Arts & Heritage Service acts as a custodian of the Rotherham Archives and Local Studies Collection on behalf of the Borough and depositors. Through its programme of exhibitions, events, and educational activities it will ensure that the collection is developed to become representative of communities from across the Borough and that

greater access for engagement with the collections is made available both within museum and community settings. The Equalities Action Plan contained at Appendix 2 provides mitigation for this risk.

14. Accountable Officers

Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming & Engagement

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp OBE	06/01/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	18/12/24
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	10/12/24

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