

JOINT ARCHIVES BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Laura Beddow, Lesley Dedman, Scott Florek and Ryan Hope

Present remotely: Cllrs Marion Le Poidevin and Andy Martin

Apologies: None

Also present: Christine Fowler (Chair, Dorset Archives Trust)

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Hannah Brown (Service Manager (Finance)), Sam Johnston (Service Manager for Archives and Records), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer), Matti Raudsepp (Corporate Director Customer and Business Delivery, BCP Council) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

61. Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

62. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

63. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 05 February 2025 were confirmed and signed.

64. Public Participation

There were no public questions.

65. Questions from Councillors

There were no questions from councillors.

66. Joint Archives Service Budget Monitoring and Budget Setting 2026/27

The Service Manager for Archives and Records presented the report for the Joint Archives Service (JAS) budget monitoring and budget setting for 2026/27. It was explained that the report gives an overview of the budget position. The JAS was over budget and was looking to increase by £32,000 next year. This year the

service managed to bring in £72,000 from two separate Dorset Estates for the archives. Since 2010 the service had raised over £1 million in external funding. During 2024-25 £800,000 was invested in the Dorset History Centre to bring the building to good working order.

It was noted that section three of the report showed the current financial position. A minor saving was made involving an employee dropping a day per week of work which would help meet next year's budget. Section five covered the salary and building energy costs. Dorset History Centre was about to sign a new contract with Ancestry. A benefit of this new contract was to include a free subscription to Ancestry for both Dorset Council and BCP's library services worth approximately £10,000 per annum to each library service.

The reserve position was around £56,000; it was previously capped at £50,000 but increased due to minor savings.

In response to a question the Service Manager for Archives and Records explained that of the figures under 5.5, the lower figures were a part of the recommendation brought with this report.

The recommendation was proposed by Cllr Dedman and seconded by Cllr Beddow.

Decision:

1. That the Joint Archives Board request the budget uplift from each council as detailed in the report noting the budgetary pressures on the service and the steps it has taken to manage its outgoings.
2. That the Joint Archives Board agree to the JAS deploying the service reserve to match fund the Development Phase of the capital project, assuming the National Lottery Heritage Fund application is successful in March 2026.

67. Joint Archives Service Fees and Charges 2026/27

The Service Manager for Archives and Records introduced the report. The report detailed ideas for realistic increases to charges where there was a tolerance to pay fees. There had been increasing resistance to paying fees, but this information was anecdotal. It was suggested that the service should look at what other archive services are charging for similar services and try to match a medium position. The service was trying to increase income wherever possible. By increasing the quantity of online content via Ancestry, it would make it realistic enough for people to want to pay.

In response to members questions the Service Manager for Archives and Records provided the following responses:

- The Service Manager for Archives and Records explained that it is not very common that TV companies come to their service. It was fortunate that they had the interest from them to come to them.

- It was explained that some lines in the report for services don't show previous because they are new.
- It was suggested that the TV companies were possibly not aware that the service exists which resulted in the lack of interest.
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The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Beddow and seconded by Cllr Hope.

Decision: That the revised fees and charges, as set out in the appendix to the report, be recommended to the executive bodies of the two funding councils for implementation from 1 April 2026.

68. **Joint Archives Service Development Plan (2021-26) Monitoring Report**

The Service Manager for Archives and Records presented the report for the Development Plan. The executive summary highlighted the achievements of the service. It was mentioned that this service plan was due to expire the following year but had every intention of revising and renewing the plan to something similar. Contingent on the new plan was the success of the Lottery application which would have fundamentally changed the way the service operates over the future years. Two key challenges were highlighted; the first was capital investment and the second was the collection of records in both paper and digital forms. There was extra staff working on the projects, and there was still a high level of interest in the archives.

There were two archive apprentices that were doing well and would complete their programs in October 2026. A new advisory group had been set up for museums to pick up on areas of interest. It was noted that volunteering is strong and the service would like to do more but was limited by what could be managed. An aspect of the Lottery project was to take on more of a wider community for the archives. The online catalogue had swelled to 420,000 entries. Multiple projects including the Wessex Water and the Bournemouth Yellow Busses projects were mentioned alongside their success. The application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was to gain resources for a hoped-for project to create around 22,000 box spaces along with improvements to the DHC building and a large-scale public engagement programme.

The following responses were provided in answer to questions from members

- The Service Manager for Archives and Records spoke regarding AI's future involvement in the service saying that certain parts could be conceived such as reading and cataloguing once AI reaches a certain level of intelligence, but there would always be a human presence to make sure the documents are being handled correctly. There will be an upward demand for online services as more documents were created and more would be used and so were keen to reduce the need to be in person.
- It was mentioned that libraries, archives and museums should be joined up more to look at better sustainability.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr Dedman and seconded by Cllr Florek.

Decision:

1. That the Joint Archives Board endorses the implementation of the 2021-2026 service plan appended to this report as demonstrating the quality, variety and value for money provided by the Joint Archives Service;
2. That the Joint Archives Board supports the Joint Archives Service's ongoing work to ensure the safe and effective transfer of appropriate physical and digital records from both BCP and Dorset Councils to ensure the preservation of the corporate memory and to deliver council efficiencies;
3. That the Joint Archives Board endorses the Joint Archives Service's application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to facilitate major capital improvements to Dorset History Centre.

69. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

70. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 2.41 pm

Chairman

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