

Joint Archives Board

5 February 2025

Budget and Service Update Report For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr R Hope, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Cllr Andy Martin, Customer, Communications and Culture, BCP Council

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director:

A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

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Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary: The Joint Archives Board (JAB) met last on 13 November 2024. It was agreed that following further analysis of the councils' financial positions the Board would need to reconvene in the New Year to confirm the service's budget for 2025/26. This report will provide update information on the budget position to assist the board in making its decision. The report will also update members on developments within the service.

It is recommended that the Joint Archives Board:

1. Approves the JAS's 2025/26 draft budget for adoption by both funding councils. This is a c.3% uplift in the budget for each council jointly providing a further £17,198 for the Joint Archives Service.
2. Notes the positive news relating to service delivery and projects by the Joint Archives Service.

Reason for Recommendation:

To comply with the terms of the *Inter-Authority Agreement on Archives (2022)*.

1. Background

1.1 The Joint Archives Board last met on 13 November 2024. This report provides an update on financial matters as well as notable developments within the service since the last meeting. A key outcome of the meeting is the recommendation of a budget for the service for the financial year 2025/26.

2. Budget 2025/26

2.1 At its meeting of 13 November 2024, it was recommended 'that the Joint Archives Board request the budget uplift from each council as detailed in the draft budget proposals for 2025/26'. The proposed increase amounted to c.3% from each of the partner councils. The total uplift, if approved would be £17,198. This follows a ten-year period in which the service has absorbed eight cash standstill financial settlements.

2.2 The proposed increases from each council are:

- BCP Council £9,417
- Dorset Council £7,781

2.3 If approved, the budget contributions for 2025/26 would be thus:

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	£322,715
Dorset Council	£307,590
Total	£630,305

3. Capital project

3.1 At its November meeting, the Board was updated on the current status of the long-standing work to provide additional appropriate accommodation for archives. The current storage position is becoming extremely tight with c. 4% available space remaining for physical archives. Over 250 boxes of archives were received at DHC in December 2024 and physical space will become increasingly limited over the next 2-3 years.

3.2 Work has re-commenced to review and confirm the specification and costings of proposed capital and public engagement work including partnerships that would form the body of an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). It is intended that an Expression of Interest be submitted to the NLHF by mid-February. If successful, this would provide a 12-month window in which a Stage 1 application could be submitted.

4. Collections Weeks

4.1 The JAS held its second 'Collections Fortnight' in December. As with the first of these now annual events, the period of uninterrupted work on both archives and the workspaces in which they are preserved and accessed was invaluable. Volunteers helpfully supplement the staff team to maximise the value of the available time.

4.2 Key outputs from the fortnight included:

- A complete reorganisation, cleaning and reconfiguration of the 'Sorting Room' – the space into which most incoming archives are received, sorted and checked prior to transfer into the repositories.
- The checking, re-packaging and enhanced description of two major collections – D-BLX (Bloxworth Estate) and D-SHA (Sherborne Almshouse)
- Auditing 1500 boxes (representing about 3% of the total collection)
- Proving additional capacity to the Hardy archive project
- 50 new accessions listed including photographs of T.E. Lawrence, material from Wytch Farm Oil Field and the Jurassic Coast Trust.

The service has published a [blog](#) detailing the activity involved.

5. Projects and service updates

There has been good progress made on a number of projects and other workstreams undertaken by the JAS.

5.1 Hardy

Work on the cataloguing of the archives of Thomas Hardy is progressing well and is on schedule to complete in September. A bid led by Dorset Museum and Art Gallery to Arts Council England for Designated status for the Hardy collection (objects and archives) has passed through its first stage. A second stage application will be submitted during 2025. [Designated status](#) is the highest UK accolade available for a cultural collection signifying 'outstanding importance'. The only other Designated collection in Dorset is at the Tank Museum. An attempt to secure some rare Hardy correspondence at auction in December was unsuccessful although a fundraising campaign managed to successfully garner c. £10,000 in pledges much of it from public donations.

5.2 [Sounds of the Southwest](#)

The JAS is a partner in this major regional Lottery-funded project which seeks to digitise rare and fragile sound recordings from across the

southwest. A set of analogue recordings has been transferred to Bristol to be digitised including recordings of people who knew Thomas Hardy. In addition, there will be training provided to JAS staff on how to manage and promote sound collections.

5.3 Yellow Buses/Wessex Water

Thanks to successful external funding applications work on the Yellow Buses and Wessex Water archives has now commenced with an 0.6 FTE archivist employed on a fixed-term contract until March 2027. A further externally funded 0.6 FTE post of Collections Assistant will be recruited to support the archivist between August 2025 and March 2027. Some of the funding will also cover conservation and digitisation work later in the project.

5.4 Estate archives – external income

The JAS has received two payments totalling £15,000 from the depositor of an estate archive with a third payment due in March. This will take the total sum to over £22,000. As the funds have been paid to Dorset Archives Trust, they can benefit from Gift Aid. When the full sum is available, the service will be able to employ an archivist to catalogue the collection over eight months. This is a good example of our work to encourage the owners of archives to contribute to the costs of cataloguing and conserving their collections.

5.5 DHC building works

Following a substantial hiatus in the renovation work at Dorset History Centre, contractors are now back on site. Current predictions are that work will complete by the end of April 2025 whereupon the car park will be returned to use.

5.6 Sandford Orcas – Acceptance in Lieu

Archives relating to the manor of Sandford Orcas have been permanently transferred to DHC following approval under the terms of the Acceptance in Lieu (of inheritance tax) scheme administered by Arts Council England. The scheme operates to allow the transfer of important cultural property into public collections where they can be preserved and accessed in perpetuity. The Sandford Orcas records include an estate map of 1702, manor court rolls and substantial amounts of estate papers.

5.7 Outreach – ‘Saving Bournemouth’s Jewish Heritage’

The JAS is working with two of Bournemouth’s Jewish congregations to ensure the preservation and longevity of their respective records. The service successfully acquired a small grant from the Rothschild Foundation which has funded a consultancy review of the records, their quantities, types and heritage values. It is hoped that the service will be able to move forward in the coming weeks in collaboration with the two congregations to plan the transfer of records to DHC.

6. Financial Implications

There is a budget uplift implication associated with this proposal for both funding councils described above in section 2.

The two funding councils provided financial position statements for the last meeting of the JAB in November 2024:

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council:

BCP Council continues to face challenging financial circumstances and is currently planning the actions necessary to meet its 2025/26 budget gap, in order to set a balanced budget. A range of savings and efficiencies are being identified to support this process, which will be confirmed in due course in line with normal budget setting timescales.

Dorset Council: financial forecast for current year

At the end of December, the Council is forecasting an overspend of £10.8m, which represents 2.7% of the Council's budget requirement (£397.7m).

This forecast is of significant concern as it identifies unbudgeted service pressures of £21.2m, which are only partially mitigated by Central Finance funding improvements of £10.4m.

The current forecast will require use of reserves. In previous years where there has been improvement during the year, this has typically been due to 'central finance' mitigation, such as releasing the contingency or improvements to collection fund. These have already been deployed in the current year and are therefore not available to mitigate any future pressures

7. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

N/A

8. Well-being and Health Implications

N/A

9. Other Implications

None

10. Risk Assessment

10.2 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium
Residual Risk: Medium

11. Equalities Impact Assessment

The JAS undertook a full EQIA in August 2023

12. Appendices

None

13. Background Papers

None

14. Report Sign Off

- 11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)