

TAMESIDE LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES CENTRE

Forward Plan (2024-2028)

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 This Forward Plan reflects the changes in the way the Council provides its services to meet the needs of its residents and visitors. As well as addressing how the Archives and Heritage sector is changing to cope with the increasing numbers of digital records and changes in the way that users interact with archives.
- 1.2 The Tameside Local Studies and Archives Unit was established in 1976 after the local government reorganisation two years earlier. It began in the old reference section of Stalybridge Library. Many of the local history books in Tameside's libraries were brought together here, and the records of Tameside Council's various predecessor organisations forming the nucleus of its archival collection. In 2005, a new purpose-built facility was opened to the public, in order to provide extra capacity for the ever-expanding collections, as well as the appropriate controlled conditions for such material. The service is an approved Place of Deposit, meaning we are allowed to accrue and hold public records and make them available.
- 1.3 As a Place of Deposit, Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre has been appointed by The National Archives to hold specific record classes in agreement with their parent authority under Section 4 (1) of the Public Records Act (1958). This ensures that records pertaining to the area remain within Tameside, and that the council and Tameside citizens have access to their historic records.
- 1.4 This includes not only council records, but records relating to courts, the NHS, and other governmental bodies and their related agencies specified in the legislation.
- 1.5 The 3.5 kilometres of shelving now hosts a wide variety of material beyond just local government records, including:
 - Tameside Reporter Archive
 - Tameside Oral History Collection
 - Tameside Image Archive
 - Manchester Regiment Archive
 - School records
 - Hospital records
 - The archives of local Churches and religious establishments
 - Various archives of important local businesses, groups and individuals
 - The Stamford Estate papers
 - Manchester Studies Oral History Collection

2. AIM OF THE FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 The aim of this Forward Plan is to provide a policy context for the work of Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre for the period 2024-2028. It outlines the main work areas proposed during this time and how the service will be delivered.
- 2.2 The proposals in the Forward Plan will help to:
 - Ensure everyone has the opportunity for people to visit, enjoy, contribute to, and engage with the collections held at the Local Studies and Archives Centre

- Increase the profile of the Borough's history among residents and beyond.
- Make the most of Tameside's collections in the present, and preserve them into future.
- Create improvements to the service, and allow for necessary changes to be made.
- Continue to support and benefit from the work of the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP), of which Tameside Local Studies & Archives is a part.
- Support the statutory obligation of Archive services to care for and store public records.

3. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

- 3.1 Tameside Local Studies and Archives' mission is to preserve Tameside's written, oral and pictorial heritage for present and future users, and to fulfil Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's legal obligation to preserve its own records. The Service does this by:

Providing a dynamic, engaging and supportive Archives Service that celebrates the people and places of Tameside, ensuring a meaningful, informative and enjoyable experience for all, whilst continuing to fulfil our statutory obligations as a Place of Deposit for public records.

4. BOROUGH DEMOGRAPHICS

- 4.1 The borough of Tameside consists of nine towns in a mainly urban area east of Manchester. It stretches from the city of Manchester to the Peak District and shares borders with Stockport, Oldham, Manchester and the borough of High Peak. Tameside is well connected to the region and beyond by the M60 and M67 motorways and by rail links to Manchester and Yorkshire.
- 4.2 The 2021 census puts the population of Tameside at 231,073, increasing from 219,300 in the previous census 10 years prior. As in many areas, the population is aging, with those with individuals between 50 and 64 being the largest growing proportionately. 20.8% of the population class themselves as having a disability. Across the borough, 85.5% of the population identify as white, 9.2% Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh, 2.1% mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 2.3% Black/Black British/Black Welsh/Caribbean/African, and 0.8% other. 78% of people have good or very good health, 15.1% have fair health and 8.1% have bad or very bad health.
- 4.3 The service aims to cater for all residents of Tameside, and so this information is taken into account in the creation of this plan, as well as the rest of our planning and policy.

5. THE COUNCIL: POLITICAL AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

- 5.1 The council has an Executive Cabinet as part of its constitution. Each member of the Cabinet has a portfolio setting out their role and responsibilities. There are eleven members of the Cabinet, which is chaired by the Executive Leader. Museums and Galleries come under the portfolio of the Executive Member for Towns and Communities.

5.2 Tameside Council is led by a Chief Executive. The Chief Executive and nine Directors make up the Single Leadership Team. The Directors are supported by fifteen Assistant Directors/Consultants, who together form the Senior Management Team.

5.3 The Museum and Galleries Service sits within Cultural and Customer Services, which is under Operations and Neighbourhoods Service Area within the Place directorate.

6. DESCRIPTION OF TAMESIDE LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES SERVICE

6.1 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service is located on Cotton Street East, along with the service's car park, beside the former Central Library. The service has a second entrance located on Oldham Road, which is used as the main entrance. The Service is open from 10am-5pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and from 10am-1pm on Saturday, with the exception of the Christmas period and Bank Holidays. The Service cares for the Council owned collections as well as public records on behalf of the National Archives, alongside a variety of deposited collections, such as the Manchester Regiment and Tameside Reporter archives. The Service falls within Tameside MBC Cultural and Customer Services, which forms part of the Operations and Neighbourhoods Directorate.

6.2 The Arts and Engagement Manager has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the service, drafting policy, budgets, marketing and exhibitions/events management.

6.3 The Archivist supports the Manager and is in charge of collections management and ensuring the Service meets National Archives standards for care, access and usage of the archival collections. The current Archivist has been in post since October 2018.

6.4 The service employs three part-time staff (a Senior Library Assistant, Assistant Librarian, and a Library Assistant), and has also employed (jointly with the Library service) a part-time Library Assistant. Together, these staff deal with the day-to-day running of the service, such as front-of-house duties, organising and running events, taking enquiries, looking after the service's library stock and computers, maintaining the search room, and coordinating volunteers.

6.6 The service regularly works with colleagues from across Cultural Services in collaboration, for example for exhibitions or in educational provision.

6.7 Fifteen volunteers take on various non-core roles, which helps the Tameside Local Studies & Archives to offer services it wouldn't otherwise be able to resource. The roles are intended to be fulfilling and meaningful to volunteers, either by engaging them in their interests, facilitating socialising through working together, or where appropriate to build specific skills and experience.

7. THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

7.1 The National Archives holds the power to appoint Places of Deposit for public records and ensure that Places of Deposit maintain core standards.

7.2 Alongside this, The National Archives also run the Archive Accreditation Scheme, which provides a more detailed framework of standards that all Places of Deposit should be adhering to, or actively working towards implementing.

7.3 The National Archives is a non-ministerial government department, reporting to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. They fulfil a leadership role in the archive sector. Its roles include ensuring the Public Records Act is adhered to, providing

guidance and advice to other archives as well as to public sector organisations that create records.

- 7.4 The Public Records Act requires certain public bodies to transfer records of historical value to places of deposit. Legislation requires this to be done by the time the records are 20 years old, although due to this change being relatively recent (previously the time allowed was 30 years) we are currently still in a transition window until 2025. The changes affect specific public sector organisations such as magistrates' courts, prisons, coroners' courts, NHS bodies and some arms-length bodies including the Environment Agency.
- 7.5 Archives and local record offices across the UK are dealing with an increase in the volume of born-digital and digitised material. This presents new challenges, not only in terms of transfer and storage, but also in preservation and accessibility.
- 7.6 Archive services are increasingly aware of the need for their collections and services to better reflect the populations they are intended to serve, and as a result a major focus across the UK is on providing services that are more adaptable to differing needs, and diversifying collections to include material that is relevant to all residents regardless of their background or identity.
- 7.7 The Archives form part of the cultural sector both nationally, regionally and locally. The cultural sector has been identified as a significant partner in regeneration linking to areas such as employment, health, social change and neighbourhood renewal. In Tameside the Archives form a central part of the cultural activity within the borough. They engender a sense of civic pride and express the local distinctiveness of the area. However we must ensure that the facilities and services provided reflect the cultural background of all citizens. The Archives must ensure that the product and service on offer remains of a high standard and continues to reflect the changes of the 21st century both in terms of our residents but also in terms of technological and digital innovations.

8. THE LOCAL CONTEXT

8.1 Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership

8.1.1 Tameside Local Studies and Archives is an active participant of the Greater Manchester Archives & Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP), made up of the various local government record offices and archives in the Greater Manchester (GM) area. These are:

- Bolton Archives and Local Studies
- Bury Archives and Local & Family History Service
- Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives
- Oldham Local Studies and Archives
- Stockport Local Heritage Library
- Tameside Local Studies and Archives
- Trafford Local Studies
- Rochdale Local Studies and Archives
- Salford City Archives and Local History Library
- Wigan Archives and Local Studies

8.1.2 GMALSP was formed in 2012 with Sector Sustainability Fund support from The National Archives, following the recommendation of a feasibility study. The members of GMALSP work together to build and implement an overarching strategy and development plan for archives in Greater Manchester.

- 8.1.3 GMALSP holds practitioners' meetings every two months, where progress is against the action plan is monitored. As necessary the group holds training sessions, visits, talks from organisations and individuals working with the Partnership on various projects.
- 8.1.4 GMALSP reports to a board made up of Senior Officers, which in turn reported to the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Statutory Functions Committee.
- 8.1.5 With the changes to local government and AGMA transferring to GMCA, the Senior Officers now report to the Greater Manchester Culture & Social Impact Fund Committee and form part of the GMCA portfolio.
- 8.1.6 The projects that GMALSP take on include monitoring and updating standards and policies, working together to achieve Archive Accreditation, negotiating jointly with genealogy companies such as FindMyPast when undertaking digitisation projects, commissioning work, and joint provision of products and services.
- 8.1.7 GMALSP are currently working to improve provisions for digital records throughout Greater Manchester, as well as looking to make new newspaper collections available online.
- 8.2 Tameside MBC
- 8.2.1 There are various local programmes and Tameside Council priorities and strategies that link to the work in Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service which help to provide a policy context. We work to support these plans and strategies including:
- Greater Manchester Cultural Strategy (2019-2024). *Grown in Greater Manchester. Known Around The World* – identifies areas of strategic opportunity across the city-region. It also sets out a clear plan of how all 10 Greater Manchester districts will work together to target resources that will develop, celebrate, protect and promote the significant culture and heritage assets of Greater Manchester.
 - Tameside Cultural Strategy. Having successfully obtained government funding, Tameside is developing a Cultural Strategy of its own. This currently exists in draft form, but is likely to become available towards the end of 2023.
 - The Archives Service actively participates in further Council wide plans and strategies that are developed within and across departments, and are aimed at meeting the goals identified in the One Corporate Plan

8.2.2 Tameside council's current forward plan has been created to reflect the council's current priorities and guiding principles, which should underpin the work of each department within Tameside. It describes aspirations for the area and population, which are grouped under five major headings. Our Forward plan aims to contribute towards achieving the objects set out in the One Corporate Plan as follows:

One Corporate Plan	Archives key contributions
Excellent Health & care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure we support activities and projects that support wellbeing. • Training staff to signpost our users to appropriate services where they may be required. • Collaborating with groups and organisations that contribute to the mental and physical wellbeing of their members and support independence in old age. • Provide a safe, welcoming and accessible space for people to meet and share their interests. • Provide lifelong learning experiences for volunteers and users. • Provide volunteering experiences enabling people to feel valued.
Successful lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide engaging facilities, workshops and activities for young people. • Work with other Council departments to support school readiness and encourage a love of learning. • Expand our school workshops programme, providing a varied set of opportunities for children to engage with local heritage. • Provide formal and informal educational opportunities for lifelong learning. • Ensure that our school workshop offerings contribute to important curriculum goals. • Use the 'Arts Mark' and 'Arts Award' initiative to create exciting and enjoyable learning experiences within the Archives. • Offer outreach and loan material for schools and community groups based on the collections. • Engendering a sense of ownership of the local heritage.

Vibrant Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for volunteers to develop skills to help them both in their personal and professional lives. • Developing the sense of public ownership of the Archives. • Offer opportunities for people to work and volunteer. • Provide opportunities for lifelong learning. • Work with community and voluntary groups, as well as businesses and organisations that contribute to Tameside's economy. • Ensuring accessibility is considered in every decision we make, and taking an adaptable approach that allows for changes to be made where needed. • Ensure that the Archives building and resources meet high health and safety standards and are well maintained. • Ensure that all visitors feel happy, welcome and safe within our service. • Carry out exhibitions and activities in an environmentally sustainable way. • Ensuring high quality customer service, attracting research into the borough, which in turn will attract new business investment and residents.
Stronger Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation in heritage events through ensuring the highest quality and the range of talks, displays and activities within the Archives Centre and out in the communities. • Actively collecting and documenting the heritage of the whole community. • Embrace health and wellbeing strategies in our work. • Offer heritage inspired opportunities that facilitate improved health and wellbeing for visitors. • Developing a sense of pride and ownership of the Archives Service and encourage communities to value the places they live. • Working with other services to provide events and facilities that promote understanding and good relations between different communities.
Digital Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting our service to allow for the preservation of and access to digital records, which are increasingly part of everyone's lives. • Provide volunteering opportunities that enable volunteers to build digital skills. • Provide resources and guidance that allow users to increase their confidence using digital resources. • Improve the online presence of our service, both through social media and elsewhere. • Consider ways in which technology can be used to improve our service.

9. THE CURRENT SITUATION

9.1 We asked Local Studies & Archives staff to contribute to a SWOT analysis of our current offer:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed, dedicated and enthusiastic staff. • Resourceful approaches to challenges faced by the service. • A wide and varied set of collections that cover a range of topics of both local and national relevance. • Close relationships with a number of local organisations and businesses. • Collaborative relationship with other council colleagues. • Impressive schedule of events, compared to larger and better resourced services • Growing schools programme. • Excellent team of dedicated volunteers, both new and long-standing. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of suitable spaces for education and outreach means schools and groups can only attend on Mondays and Fridays. • Lack of spare space capacity means the service would struggle to house any sizeable new collections if the opportunity arose. • Current lack of provision for access to digital records. • Web presence could be stronger.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additions to staff and volunteers in our team could contribute to new opportunities and ideas. • Opportunity to use exhibition space in the market hall. • Growing schools programme provides scope for increasing interaction with a younger audience • Working with GMALSP provides scope for us to take on opportunities potentially too large for individual services. • Increasing interest from companies in acquiring copies of records for online services. • The collections being made available by the SMILE Project and its legacy. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing quantity of digital records. • Difficulty in collecting council records as they increasingly become digital, and as staff are more likely to work remotely. • New large accessions that may exceed our immediate storage capacity. • Funding reductions • Any future reduction in staffing. • Reduction in opening hours. • Loss of institutional knowledge through staff turnover. • Capacity limits on volunteers may lead to missed opportunities.

9.2 The core Local Studies & Archives statistics for the last full financial year are as follows:

	2022/23
Participants (in-person visitors + online users)	36,899
Enquiries	14,988
Volunteer hours	943.5
Event attendees	651

9.2.1 COVID-19

Like many services, engagement was drastically affected during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The service remained closed for several months during each major lockdown, although we continued to answer enquiries and seek to make material available in other ways. We also worked hard to alter the way we worked with volunteers, so that our SMILE! Project could continue, despite initially intending to undertake the majority of the project in-person. Despite the fact that the 23 project volunteers were only able to meet in-person on a handful of occasions during the project, they still logged 2,382 hours during the length of the project.

9.2.2 Participants

In-person visitors had been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as being affected by changes in how we count visitors due to changes to our entrances. However, since the end of the pandemic they have begun to increase again. A number of our regular visitors have, for a variety of reasons, not been able to return since the end of the pandemic unfortunately. This must therefore be used as an added impetus to expand our users beyond the traditional audiences. However, things have begun to pick up further, so there is cause for optimism, as well as further work needed.

9.2.3 Enquiries

Our enquiry numbers had previously faced a relatively steady decline throughout the previous Forward Plan period. This may reflect the relative decline of popularity of family history as a hobby, which was very much in fashion at the start of this decade due to shows such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*, as well as increased access to records at home. These have however stabilised since around 2018, with only the brief decrease during COVID being quickly reversed as the service and users adapted to new ways to engage with each other.

9.2.4 Volunteer hours

The work of our volunteers is immeasurably important. Whilst of course all core activities are carried out by staff, having volunteers enables us to offer services that we would be otherwise unable to resource. Our volunteer programme is relatively expansive for a service of our size, and gives opportunities to those with an interest in Local History to become involved, share their passions, and learn new skills. Similarly to visitor numbers, these had been affected by the pandemic. Several volunteers have not been able to return to their pre-pandemic activities, and engagement with local history groups has decreased. Numbers remain strong however, boosted by the Smile! Project, which allowed us to record significant volunteer hours during the difficult pandemic. Since the low of 2020/2021, and despite the end of the Smile! project, numbers have remained strong, and we have in the current financial year seen increased interest.

9.2.5 Events attended

Event attendances have bounced back to exceed pre-pandemic numbers, perhaps reflecting a change in how the population engages with our service. Some of these were in-person, and a smaller number of them remote. We have found that broadly our attendees have resumed in-person attendance, but we still provide a remote option for those unable or unwilling to visit and have found it to be popular.

9.2.6 Website and online catalogue

Both online figures have been affected by the introduction of the new InTameside website, which allows us to share information about our service and events in a more effective way. As a result, in future it will be necessary to find a new way to measure online performance.

Our catalogue is not currently available from the new website, but we are working to ensure it becomes so, in order that users are better able to find it.

9.3 Archives Accreditation

9.3.1 The service was successful in obtaining full Archive Accreditation in autumn 2018, ensuring that it met the appropriate standards as a Place of Deposit (PoD), and is taking active steps to address any shortcomings. The interim Archive Accreditation review carried out in 2021 was successfully completed, with the review team satisfied by our progress.

9.3.2 Archives Accreditation is both a tool for The National Archives to fulfil their statutory obligations regarding PoDs, by ensuring that standards are met and that records are safe and secure, and is also a tool designed to help Archive Services understand their strengths and weaknesses better, and to enable them to better advocate for further help or resources where needed.

9.3.3 As a designated PoD, Archive Accreditation is therefore crucial to us to ensure we keep our PoD status and to ensure that the records we hold are being kept appropriately, and not put at risk by our processes.

9.3.4 The feedback from the Accreditation process included specific action points that will be embedded into this forward plan going forward, to ensure that they are met by the time the service needs to undergo reaccreditation. Much work has been done to meet these, such as work to mitigate the effect of the library relocation on our service, and obtaining storage space and guidelines for the storage of digital materials.

9.3.5 This forward plan is extremely important, given that we are due to fully renew Archive Accreditation in 2024, and as such this is our opportunity to implement any further work needed to fully realise our goals in time.

9.4 Audience Development

9.4.1 A survey was carried out in collaboration with the Museums and Galleries team to gather information about our audiences, as well as about those who do not use our service.

9.4.2 Tameside Local Studies & Archives is working on a plan for Audience Development going forward, that will separately lay out a set of aims that we hope to fulfil and a plan for achieving these. This will especially aim to lay out a plan for increasing our engagement with global majority audiences, as well as younger members of the population, both of which are underserved by the archives currently.

9.4.3 The service has continued to develop its school offer since the previous Forward Plan, with an increased range of workshops available and a more flexible approach to how these can be delivered. This ensures we are able to help teachers fulfil key aspects of the curriculum around local history and geography, as well as other areas that tie in to these.

9.4.4 A longstanding issue arising in feedback from non-visitors to the Archives is that they either do not know the Archives existed or what the Archives has to offer. We have done work in this area by increasing the visibility of our building, improving our online presence, and increasing engagements undertaken outside of our building. However it is clear that more

must be done in this area, which will there also feature in our upcoming Audience Development plan.

9.5 Tameside Local Studies and Archives storage and collection management

- 9.5.1 Collections are held in trust for public enjoyment, research, inspiration and learning. The records are stored on-site in our purpose-built strong rooms, with environmental controls in place. Environmental monitoring is in place in the form of quarterly TinyTag monitoring, as well as regular spot-checks carried out day to day by the Archivist. Monitoring for pests is also carried out using sticky traps. Staff are aware of the conditions recommended in archival standards such as *BS 4971:2017; Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections*.
- 9.5.2 The service uses the GMALSP Collections Policy, which lays out the remit of every service within Greater Manchester. Beyond the requirement to collect public records, and the records of our local authorities, the policy references other specific items that services take. In the case of Tameside, this includes other items of local interest such as those of businesses, groups, families or individuals, as well as the records of the Manchester Regiment.
- 9.5.3 The archive collection acts as a repository for the heritage of the region and plays a key part in long-term preservation of our heritage and history both at a local studies level but also as a nationally recognised Place of Deposit for key public records.
- 9.5.4 The Local Studies and Archives Centre in Ashton-under-Lyne stores, cares for and makes accessible the borough's recorded heritage. The Museums and Galleries care for objects and artworks. There is much cross over between our collections, and the collecting priorities of the Galleries and Museums Service.
- 9.5.5 Born-digital records form an increasingly significant proportion of archival collections nationally, our collection included. At the time of our previous forward plan, we were not able to store digital records in a secure way, and could only accept and retain portable media. This is a highly risky storage solution, especially for long term usage, and so in 2021 we obtained server space through Tameside's IT team that is exclusively for the storage of archive material. Whilst not a completely perfect solution, this means we do at last have storage space that is secure, backed up regularly, and accessible only to key staff within the service.
- 9.5.6 As part of these changes regarding digital records, we will need to further consider how these records can be made available. A solution is currently being worked on to ensure that records are both accessible and safely preserved. Work within GMALSP will form part of the solution.

9.6 Conservation

- 9.6.1 Where conservation is required, our service has access to a certain number of hours from the Greater Manchester Archive's conservator team, who work across GMALSP.
- 9.6.2 Where previously a single general conservator role existed at Manchester Central Library, the role is now split between a part-time Digital Preservation Archivist, and a part-time Conservation Officer.
- 9.6.3 In 2018, GMALSP commissioned a piece of work that would help archive services across GM begin to be able to get ahead of the digital records issue. The outcome of the work includes the creation of revised policies, which now include specific provisions and procedures for digital records. These will be finalised and implemented shortly. The work of

the Digital Preservation Archivist includes assisting archive services in implementing and improving the revised GMALSP policies, as well as assisting with other issues that arise.

9.7 Documentation

- 9.7.1 Our documentation procedures are based on the Local Studies and Archive Accessioning and Cataloguing Standards produced by GMALSP. These in turn align with and are used in conjunction with *ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description (2nd edition)*, and the *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR(CPF))*, which are both nationally and internationally recognised standards for archival description.
- 9.7.2 Items are accessioned upon arrival, with details of the item as well as the donator/depositor taken and recorded, and all donations/deposits receive an accession number. After that they are catalogued, usually by box-listing, and items receive a catalogue reference number, after which they are listed on the public catalogue, and are publically available to view by users. Both the accession and catalogue databases are maintained on Axiell CALM software.
- 9.7.3 Like many archives across the country, we have a sizable backlog of items to be catalogued. We will continue to use both listing by staff and box-listing (the practice of producing overviews of what a box contains rather than listing every item in explicit detail) by volunteers to attempt to reduce this backlog. This will allow us to make items available that are currently not accessible to the public.

9.8 Environmental Sustainability

- 9.8.1 We are committed to working towards environmental sustainability, as set out in the Council's corporate plan. As an organisation concerned in large part with heritage, we are interested in preserving our collections for the benefit of future generations. As part of this, it is our responsibility to reduce our impact on the environment and to use any opportunities we have to influence suppliers, contractors and visitors, and we recognise the contribution we can make towards the regeneration and sustainability of our local communities.
- 9.8.2 Crucially, we also have a role in this by helping to promote Tameside's natural areas and green spaces, and raise awareness of how these have changed over time. This helps to give the community a sense of understanding and ownership over their Borough, which in turn emphasises the importance of protecting it.
- 9.8.3 We will look to improve our commitment by:
- Seeking to achieve sustainability targets set by government and the Council.
 - Consider better promoting Tameside current and historic green spaces, to ensure everyone is aware of what the Borough has to offer and why it must be cherished.
 - Working with partners in the implementation of energy saving measures.
 - Minimising waste through the reduction, re-use and recycling of materials and by using reconditioned and recycled products where such alternatives are available.
 - Encourage staff awareness through communication and training and recognise that staff engagement is an important and key factor for success. All staff to work in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.
 - Engage with visitors and partners to share our vision and to raise awareness of sustainability issues.

- Introduce green workplace initiatives to lead to reductions in energy usage.
- Ensure consideration is given to the impact on the environment and sustainability before committing expenditure or beginning any new projects.
- Conserve energy, water, fuel and products from natural resources whenever possible.
- To commit to involvement and support for the green initiatives undertaken by the wider council.

10 CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS OF VIEWS

10.1 We listen to the comments made by our visitors and service users and try to respond to their needs. Our offer and service is on the whole informed by informal conversations and visitor feedback. Topics raised in this manner include a greater focus on schools and young people, a greater range of events, and increased collaboration with local groups and organisations, all of which will form aspects of this forward plan.

10.2 Our consultation survey

10.2.1 Prior to the creation of this forward plan, the service has (in collaboration with our colleagues at Museums & Galleries) undertaken consultation with the public. This was done via a survey available both on-line on the Council's website and off-line in printed format at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre and Portland Basin Museum. It was also publicised via social media.

10.2.2 The survey had 163 responses in total. Of these, 82 had visited the Tameside Local Studies & Archive Service, making the survey almost half and half between users and non-users.

10.2.3 The vast majority of those who had not visited the service cited either "I didn't know they existed", or "I know about them but haven't got round to visiting yet". This is positive, as it suggests a potentially responsive non-audience. Very few (5) cited non-interest in the service as a reason, although a small but important number (7) also cited not being able to access the service. This suggests two tasks for us. Firstly, ensuring those not currently aware of our service are made aware of it, and given a positive impression. Secondly, working to ensure that those who wish to visit but have not had the opportunity, can be either encouraged to visit if already able, and that those who may face access issues or barriers can be assisted in using the service.

10.2.4 Of the respondents who had never visited, some of those who cited reasons mentioned that they either "didn't know it existed" or saw "no obvious or simple means of accessing". This reaffirms the need for us to expand our marketing efforts, and continue to reach out to individuals who aren't regular service users currently. One of these respondents mentioned in answer to a question about what would persuade them to use the service, that better marketing in conjunction with the library would help the service's profile. This links in to our objective in the action plan for better wayfinding between our service and other parts of culture.

10.2.5 Amongst the answers most popular in "What would attract you to visit Tameside Local Studies & Archives" were "Talks on Topics of Interest" and "Events and celebrations around historic anniversaries". Both of these are already aims we attempt to cater to strongly, and our events receive good audience numbers and positive feedback. The next question in the survey, asking respondents what they felt priorities for the service should be, also had "Increase number of events and activities at the centre" as the highest scoring answer,

suggesting these are an incredibly popular part of our offer and something we must continue to work on. However, to better cater to a greater proportion of the community, there is more work to do to broaden the topics covered, and the historic anniversaries celebrated, to ensure that these relate to as many people as possible. This issue will be covered further in our Audience Development Plan.

- 10.2.6 Amongst service priorities, “Working more closely with the community” also scored highly, suggesting we need to consider how we may be able to work with the community in different ways beyond what we do currently. “Improve marketing of the service” scored highly, further supporting our findings regarding non-users reasoning for not having attended the service.
- 10.2.7 When asked how they would most like to engage with the service, “In-person events” was the highest scorer by a large margin (119, almost twice as many compared to the next highest answer “Online, through social media”, which scored 69). This suggests that whilst there may be an increasing move to offer services remotely where possible in some areas, and we wish to be flexible in providing access to services for those unable to reach us physically, the demand for a physical service delivered on the premises remains as high as ever.
- 10.2.8 Other aspects that were focused on heavily in open-ended responses, were the importance of volunteering, and a greater focus on Tameside’s civic pride, communities, and borough identity. As such, all of these will be considered when decisions are made regarding future, events, projects, and exhibitions.

11 RESOURCE PLAN

- 11.1 The Local Studies budget funds a full-time Archivist, part-time Senior Local History Librarian, one part-time Senior Library Assistant and one full-time equivalent Library Assistant. The funding covers all aspects of the Service but the Service does seek additional external funding where appropriate to undertake specific projects.
- 11.2 In June 2019 the Service has submitted a bid for £49,900 to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to digitise the Reporter photographic archive in partnership with Jigsaw Housing residents. Jigsaw housing has already committed £10,000 towards the project and the Service is awaiting the outcome from NLHF.
- 11.3 The Service will continue to be subject to the risk of budgetary pressures, which may come in the form of wider Council budgetary pressures, or due to sudden costs such as a large unexpected deposit or donation of significant importance, or maintenance required for the service’s building and resources.
- 11.4 We will continue to actively see out opportunities for projects and funding that tie in with our goals, and the aims of this Forward Plan.

12 SERVICE AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTION PLANS FOR 2024-2028

- 12.1 Our key aims are to provide:
1. **Access to Services:** Ensure that our Services are accessible, sustainable and friendly, reaching beyond our visiting audiences, and all with the highest standards of customer care.
 2. **Access to Learning:** Offering visitors engaging, inspirational and informative experiences, as well as creating a compelling offer for school groups.

3. **Access to Collections:** Collect, care for, document and develop the borough's archives and provide access to them in imaginative, informative and engaging ways.

12.2 **Key issues.**

12.2.1 Our key objectives fall under the themes of our key aims, and several key issues that we must face throughout the coming 5 years run through several of our objectives. These issues are headline priorities for the service over the life of this Forward Plan, and also encompass the recommendations made in our previous Accreditation findings:

- To maintain and develop our service offer by ensuring high quality events and activities continue to take place, the continued collaboration with internal and external partners, good media presence, and a need to further expand the Service's user base via school workshops and targeted work with underrepresented groups in Tameside.
- Ensure digital content is stored and collected in line with TNA best practice and in conjunction with GMALSP to achieve best value and best practice across Greater Manchester. This will include the procurement of server space to store records securely.
- Ensure the Archive is representative of all Tameside communities and remains representative of the borough's demographics. This means the continued support and active encouragement of non-users to engage with the Archives through targeted work and projects.

12.3 **Action Plan**

12.3.1 Certain assumptions have been made in costing the following activities; that the Local Studies & Archives revenue budget will be maintained at current levels and that the staffing structure will be unchanged. Work will be funded using revenue funding unless otherwise specified, for example i capital funding has been requested or grant funding sought.

12.3.2 **Access to Services:** Ensure that our Services are accessible, sustainable and friendly, with the highest standards of customer care.

Objective	Lead staff	Task(s) required	Timescale
1.1 Continuing to maintain and expand interest in our regular events programmes.	Local Studies Librarian/Senior Library Assistant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue programming our History Club and Masterclass sessions. 2. Increase marketing for these sessions through the new InTameside website, as well as through physical leaflets and posters. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The service's 2024 event programme will be finalised before the end of 2023. Programming for 2024 ongoing throughout the year. 2. Ongoing throughout the year, with the events leaflet to be published as soon as programme finalised.
1.2 Consider how we can best use the exhibition spaces and resources available to us throughout Tameside.	All staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reconsider the layout and contents of the Atrium, and continue to use the exhibition board there. 2. Seek out further opportunities for collaboration around exhibitions, and bring exciting new programming to Tameside. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing, with exhibitions changing frequently – often every month, sometimes more if events are held. 2. We are currently discussing opportunities with one artist group with whom we hope to collaborate by mid-2024, and are seeking out more opportunities to discuss. We intend to build long-term relationships which can create repeated value for Tameside.

<p>1.3 Improve wayfinding from library and other cultural venues to and from archives</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a plan for wayfinding that includes Ashton Library and Portland Basin Museum. 2. Continue to review how we can improve the visibility of our building. 3. Consider how we can have a presence in other areas of Tameside that are sustainable with our current resources. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Already working on a wayfinding project with UKSPF allocation for Ashton Creative Improvement District. 2. Much work has been done already, with improved signage and banners, and an improved appearance now that our trees are continuing to grow. Work is being done to try and unblock the windows, to make it possible to see into the Archive centre from outside. This will hopefully be completed by the mid-2024, assuming that the searchroom can accommodate books elsewhere. 3. This forms part of the consideration for planning and attending events in 2024, and should continue each year.
<p>1.4 Ensure our website is easy to use and accessible for users.</p>	<p>Archivist/Senior Library Assistant</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the relationship between InTameside and our own pages on the council website. 2. Increase our presence on the InTameside website. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Currently work is being done on the website of the council more widely, so we plan to use this opportunity to improve both the organisation of our pages, as well as more clearly define what is featured on each website. This is hoped to be done by mid-2024 2. Thanks to a vacancy having recently been filled, with a renewed focus on our online presence being an essential part of the new staff member's role, we hope that this can be ongoing once they have been trained appropriately.

<p>1.5 Continue to ensure we operate in the most environmentally sustainable way possible.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce waste paper in the search room. 2. Continue to use, encourage amongst users, the use of scrap paper, as well as unrequired packaging materials that comes from our repackaging of archival items. Non-archival materials can use these rather than new material. 3. Avoid use of disposable crockery at events etc. 4. Target use of physical promotional materials carefully, to avoid wastage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All items already implemented, improvement where possible is ongoing.
<p>1.6 Thoroughly review existing marketing, to create a marketing strategy that will enable us to better reach our target audiences</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review our social media (mainly Twitter) practices to increase the quantity and quality of our posts and of public engagement with them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertaken as part of the training of the new staff member.
<p>1.7 Continue to develop events that inspire pride in Tameside's heritage, and foster a sense of community</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend a greater variety of local cultural events 2. Use council social media channels to spread local heritage beyond just our visitors. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After a period of being relatively understaffed, we are now in a position to attend more events, and have already used the opportunity to increase our presence. This will remain ongoing. 2. Ongoing, in conjunction with our reviewing of social media usage which is to be completed by the end of 2023.

<p>1.8 Increase engagement with Global Majority audiences to the point that accessions from diverse communities are being received at an appreciably higher level.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that new projects undertaken not only place an emphasis on this issue, but are built around it. 2. Increase efforts to build relationships with local communities and community groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work has been done to learn from previous projects in order to ensure that future work, especially funding applications, are better able to contribute to this goal. 2. This is ongoing through speaking with local businesses and organisations, but more must be done. This is being made a priority in the coming year especially.
<p>1.9 Continuing to work with genealogy partners to digitise key records, to make them more widely accessible</p>	<p>Archivist</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain our copies of digitised rate book/electoral register material from FindMyPast, and fill any gaps in their scanning work. 2. Seek opportunities, in conjunction with GMALSP, for further such projects in the future. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussions are underway to obtain these, and to fill in gaps. 2. As opportunities arise/offers from genealogy websites are presented. Currently work is being done around some specific collections which we hope will lead to a project in the coming year.

12.3.4 **Access to Learning:** Offer visitors engaging, inspirational and informative experiences.

Action	Lead staff	Task(s) required	Timescale
2.1 Further expand our offer for schools	Archivist/all staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create different versions of Victorian Tameside In The Archives workshop, to reflect different towns. 2. Promote our newly created offers for school workshops relating to canals and hatting, as well as our flexible Lost Words kit. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dukinfield, Ashton, and Hyde currently created. Versions for other towns will be created to promote the offering in those areas. 2. Complete by early 2024.
2.2 Reach out to schools in areas we have not previously interacted with	Archivist/all staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin to advertise actively, as so far interest has been via word-of-mouth, or where a school has directly contacted us. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing, and will be a crucial part of the promotion of our new sessions.
2.3 Create a plan to explore the development of more heritage based arts opportunities.	All staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look at what was learnt from previous art projects we've run/hosted (Ashton Munitions Explosion collage, History Forum's Peterloo Banners, and ongoing Artist Project). 2. Look for opportunities to plan similar projects. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plans for evaluation of Artist project already in place, pending progress of the project. 2. Remains ongoing, individually as well as part of GMALSP, in order to identify important upcoming commemorations/anniversaries.

<p>2.4 Continue to maintain and improve our volunteer programme</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and prepare tasks that could be best performed by volunteers. 2. Where possible, assign tasks to appropriate volunteers. 3. Implement GMALSP-produced documentation regarding volunteers. 4. Continue to improve and amend a clear guide that states which volunteers are undertaking which role, and what resources are required, to ensure continuity when different staff are present. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing as tasks become available. A new document has been produced that is shared by staff, to identify and document such opportunities. 2. As we are limited by space and resources, tasks can only be assigned to existing volunteers who have completed a previous task, unless an opportunity to take on further volunteers arises. 3. Constantly ongoing, with new procedures implemented as new volunteers are taken on. 4. This is ongoing, and work is being done to improve the usability of the document with the assistance of all staff.
---	------------------	--	---

12.3.5 **Access to Collections:** Collect, care for, document and develop the borough’s collections and provide access to them in imaginative, informative and engaging ways.

Action	Lead staff	Task(s) required	Timescale
3.1 To meet the changing requirements of archives due to the increase in born-digital records	Archivist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase server space to accommodate further records. 2. Moving all current born-digital and digital surrogate records from portable media. 3. Creating a suitable process for access to digital items that protects records. 4. Implementing a system whereby new digital records can be transferred straight to directly to our server. 5. Implementing new tools to monitor digital records appropriately. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This will be a priority for the remainder of 2023, to ensure that records are properly stored. 2. Ongoing, but also dependent on above task. 3. To be done in accordance with moving records also, and in collaboration with GMALSP. Early 2023. 4. This is ongoing, and dependent on the obtaining of specific software items. Collaboration with GMALSP will be essential. 5. As per above item. Fixity check software obtained, to be implemented on new material once server space is increased.

<p>3.2 Continue to make previously inaccessible items available, and improve accessibility generally.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By box-listing, begin to make inroads into the listing backlog. 2. Continue to work on the legacy of the Smile! Project, making more material available online. This is both through social media and our collections pages. 3. Making a greater proportion of our oral history and film collections available. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Already underway, with a certain amount of time put aside each week by the Archivist for listing. Volunteers with suitable experience and desire to do so are also working on box-listing. 2. Ongoing since the end of the project. Many volunteers were maintained afterwards and continue their work. 3. Ongoing, in collaboration with the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage Project (now complete) and the North West Film Archive.
<p>3.3 Continue to review our document ordering notice period as recommended by the Archives Accreditation Panel</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyse whether there is any scope for reducing or removing document order notice period. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing, to be reviewed as now that staff levels are back to full. We increasingly try to be as flexible as possible, and often retrieve items without prior notice if possible. However this is so far not our policy.

<p>3.4 Ensuring we are able to cope with future accruals and accessions, including through storage firms such as Deepstore</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure frameworks to acquire extra storage space where necessary, set up through GMALSP, are renewed appropriately. 2. Reorganising collections, in order to increase capacity. 3. Transferring items that do not belong in Tameside to the appropriate authorities. 4. Assessing and sorting our framed items, including transferring items if appropriate, and removal of frames where not relevant to provenance of item. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing by GMALSP members. 2. Ongoing, through the removal of non-archival material, and deaccessioning of duplicate items, or those which do not fall within our collecting policy. 3. Ongoing as such items are found. 4. Begin by end of 2024 – the above items will make a bigger difference to space in less time.
<p>3.5 Work with NHS to begin process of transferring public records</p>	<p>Archivist</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify relevant contacts in record-creating organisations, especially the NHS. 2. Working with these organisations, decide which records should come to us. 3. Begin to transfer these records. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work is being done at a national level through the National Archives on NHS records, as well as a Greater Manchester level regarding public records more generally. NHS records particularly remain an unresolved issue. 2. Underway, through work with Tameside’s Records Manager. 3. Pending completion of above tasks.

3.7 Working in conjunction with Records Manager to ensure that relevant records are transferred as soon and as smoothly as possible from other council departments.	Archivist	1. Ensure that council policies inform employees and departments of the archive and its role, as well as their role in transferring records.	1. Ongoing through cooperation with Records Manager.
3.8 Working towards the retention of Archive Accreditation, completing the Reaccreditation Stage (6 years after initial award).	Archivist	1. Ensuring we are continuing to meet Accreditation standards, and have acted upon recommendations from our Accreditation feedback.	1. Ongoing, with a view to being called for the Reaccreditation stage in 2024.
3.9 Review and update Risk Assessments and Emergency plans.	All staff	1. Ensure that all documents are updated in accordance with changes to the service or to staff.	1. Ongoing, with annual review of Risk Assessments and Emergency Plans, with possibility of training to be provided through GMALSP later.
3.10 Test disaster plan	All staff	1. Create a plan for testing our disaster plan, ensuring all necessary features are covered, and undertake test.	1. Complete a plan for a test by end of 2023.

13 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 13.1 The Forward Plan will be the basis for the next five years for developing new programmes for work and for bidding for new sources of income. The proposals in the strategy will be monitored annually, and the full strategy reviewed in 2028.