

Report to: EXECUTIVE CABINET

Date: 23 October 2019

Executive Member/Reporting Officer: Councillor Leanne Feeley – Executive Member Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage
Emma Varnam – Assistant Director Operations and Neighbourhoods

Subject: LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES FORWARD PLAN 2019-2024

Report Summary:

Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre is located in a purpose-built environmentally controlled building adjacent to the former Ashton Library on Old street.

The National Archives (TNA) is the National body with ministerial governance in place that oversees Archives across the UK. TNA act as the professional body for archive services and as such set the standards for best collections care and best practice public access to records.

Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre is an approved Place of Deposit, meaning the service holds certain public records of local interest, such as the council's records. In 2013 TNA instigated a National Accreditation Scheme which formally set out policies and procedures required to be maintained by Places of Deposit.

The service gained full accreditation in 2018 as it meets all the required standards. Accreditation is a reiterative process, meaning that accredited services undergo a Review Stage after 3 years, and full reaccreditation after 6 years. A strong forward plan is important in helping the service maintain high standards, and in realising the improvement actions recommended by the Accreditation Panel in 2018. It is also essential in demonstrating to the Accreditation Panel how the service will achieve its aims and ambitions, and is required for submitting an Accreditation application.

A forward plan for the service has been developed in consultation with the general public, the Greater Manchester Local Studies and Archives Partnership (GMALSP) and National Archives' priorities in mind.

This report sets out the key priorities of the proposed Forward Plan covering 2019-2024, and seeks formal approval of the plan.

Recommendations: It is recommended to Executive Cabinet that the contents of the report are noted and the Tameside Local Studies and Archives' forward plan covering 2019-2024 is formally approved.

Corporate Plan: The forward plan is aligned to priority 6: Nurturing our Communities and having pride in our people, our place and our shared heritage.

Policy Implications: It is essential that the proposed forward plan demonstrate value for money and makes a clear contribution to Council priorities.

Financial Implications:
**(Authorised by the statutory
Section 151 Officer & Chief
Finance Officer)**

There are no direct financial implications of this report. However there are potential future costs if the storage space for the archives becomes inadequate, costs will need to be identified and highlighted as a pressure for budget planning processes.

Legal Implications:
**(Authorised by the Borough
Solicitor)**

This is not a statutory service however, the Council does have statutory duties in respect of some records and artefacts in its possession and therefore if it did not maintain the necessary standards it would need to procure those services from 3rd parties.

Risk Management:

Failure of the service to meet the standards set out by the Archive Accreditation scheme managed by The National Archives could result in failure to obtain reaccreditation, and could in the long run risk its Place of Deposit status. This would mean that public records currently held by the service would need to be sited with another accredited Greater Manchester Archives Service or with The National Archives. Having a forward plan in place as set out in the report mitigates this risk.

Access to Information:

Appendix 1	Local Studies and Archives Forward Plan 2019-2024 and Action Plan
Appendix 2	full results of the consultation

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Marie Holland, Arts and Engagement Manager



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre was established in 1976 after the local government reorganisation in 1974. It was located in the old reference section of Stalybridge Library. Many of the local history books in Tameside's libraries were brought together there along with the records of Tameside Council's various predecessor organisations forming the nucleus of its archival collection.
- 1.2 Today Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre is located in a purpose-built environmentally controlled building adjacent to the former Ashton Library on Old street.
- 1.3 The National Archives (TNA) is the National body with ministerial governance in place that oversees Archives across the UK. TNA act as the professional body for archive services and as such set the standards for best collections care and best practice public access to records.
- 1.4 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre is an approved Place of Deposit, meaning the service holds certain public records of local interest, such as the council's records. Places of Deposit are appointed to hold records on behalf of the TNA in cases where records are of local interest, or where it is deemed that the most appropriate location for these records is with their creating organisation (in this case, Tameside MBC). In 2013 TNA instigated a National Accreditation Scheme which formally set out policies and procedures required to be maintained by Places of Deposit.
- 1.5 The service gained full accreditation in 2018 as it meets all the required standards. Accreditation is a reiterative process, meaning that the service is continuously monitored. Accredited services undergo a Review Stage after 3 years, and full reaccreditation after 6 years. A strong forward plan is important in helping the service maintain high standards, and in realising the improvement actions recommended by the Accreditation Panel in 2018. It is also essential in demonstrating to the Accreditation Panel how the service will achieve its aims and ambitions, and is required for submitting an Accreditation application.
- 1.6 A forward plan for the service has been developed in consultation with the general public, the Greater Manchester Local Studies and Archives Partnership (GMALSP) and National Archives' priorities in mind.
- 1.7 This report sets out the key priorities of the proposed Forward Plan covering 2019-2024, and seeks formal approval of the plan.

2. TAMESIDE LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES SERVICE

- 2.1 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service 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 support key Council priorities especially in enhancing a sense of civic pride by promoting the local heritage of the area.
- 2.2 The Archives care for approximately 3.5 kilometres of shelved items, which beyond other local government records include:
 - 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
- Archives of important local businesses, groups and individuals
- The Stamford Estate
- Manchester Studies Oral History Collection

2.3 The Archives are predominantly used for research by pupils, scholars and private individuals wishing to find out more about family history, military history, local heritage and geography. It provides local context for locally, nationally and internationally significant events such as the First and Second World Wars, Women's Suffrage and Peterloo. The service also arranges a range of community engagement activities from talks on local historical subject-matter, object handling sessions, children's history detective sessions as well as school workshops.

2.4 In 2018-2019 30,097 people visited the Centre and 85,315 people used the online search facilities provided by the service.

2.5 A key feature of the service is the continuous work carried out by the volunteers working within the service. In 2018-19 1503 hours were contributed by volunteers. Volunteers carry out essential tasks such as cleaning maps, digitising records, writing blogs, transcribing hand-written documents and generally supporting the service through research.

2.6 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre especially benefits from the support of the Tameside Local History Forum (the Forum) whose members are regular visitors and also work as volunteers at the Centre. Together the service and the Forum develop the annual History Festival which takes place across the borough in September and links in with National Heritage Open Days. The service also support the Forum with research and development of books; in 2018 a book entitled Women of Tameside was published to commemorate Women's Suffrage and to highlight the significant role played by women across the decades in Tameside. In 2019 the service supported the creating of the Forum's Peterloo book detailing the local context for the nationally significant event.

2.7 Tameside Local Studies and Archives apply for external funding to deliver projects. In 2017, the service was awarded £30,000 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to develop a volunteering scheme in partnership with Adullam Housing. The scheme created a sustainable volunteering model which enables Adullam Housing residents at risk of homelessness a chance to volunteer in the Archives thereby developing a sense of place, purpose and increased opportunities for gaining employment. The scheme is ongoing and is being used as a case study by MHCLG due to its exemplary outcomes in terms of social benefits for the volunteers and the essential work they have done making more archival material accessible to the general public.

2.8 The service also benefits from the partnership within GMALSP which together apply for external funding to deliver key strategic projects. The most recent of these being the current development of a digital strategy for all members and opportunity for digital CPD training for Archivists.

3. GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES PARTNERSHIP (GMALSP)

3.1 The service works closely with other Greater Manchester authorities and formed the GMALSP in 2012.

- 3.2 GMALSP is made up of the following services:
- 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
- 3.3 The partnership was formed in order for archive services in Greater Manchester to be able to formally work together on raising standards, joint projects, sharing best practice, creating and implementing new policies, and occasionally pooling resources. These elements all form part of the group's formal development plan. GMALSP holds practitioners meetings every two months, where progress on the development plan is monitored and reviewed.
- 3.4 Recent examples of GMALSP's work have included the large scale family history digitisation project resulting in rate books and census records being made available online via Find My Past and the ten authorities' archives services having free subscriptions for users to access Find My Past's website. It also includes the burgeoning development of a GM wide digital preservation policy. This is being designed in accordance with National Archives Accreditation Scheme guidelines and will offer best practice and also best value for money by working jointly across Greater Manchester. This will ensure valuable digital information remains usable over time and reflects the changes in archive holdings nationally; from paper records to born digital records which Archives are and will be increasingly asked to store.
- 3.5 A steering group of senior officers also assess GMALSP practitioners' work. Finally the group's Chair reports directly to GMCA's Cultural Steering group. This steering group signs off the group's plans and policies. This was a role previously performed by the Section 48 AGMA Statutory Functions Committee.

4. ACCREDITATION

- 4.1 In 2013 The National Archives set out a scheme aimed at creating a set of standards for UK Archives. It formally looks at how an archive service acquires, preserves and provides access to their collections over the long term, through the management of risks and by planning for change. An accredited archive service delivers within a framework of professionally recognised standards, supported by effective resourcing and management structures.
- 4.2 The Archive Service Accreditation is awarded by the UK Archive Service Accreditation Committee working on behalf of The National Archives. The Scheme also enables the National Archives to fulfil its statutory functions relating to Places of Deposit.
- 4.3 The Places of Deposit is a formal relationship between the National Archives and its partner organisations, in this case Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre.
- 4.4 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre is appointed to hold specific public records in agreement with National Archives and TMBC under Section 4 (1) of the Public Records Act (1958).

4.5 A reason for such an appointment is typically that the records are of strong local interest and are best made available within the context of a local archive service, or that the records are retained by their creating institution and this is the most appropriate location for their ongoing use. Public records held by Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre include:

- School records (log books, admissions)
- Health records (board minutes)
- Council documents (rate books, minutes, electoral registers, financial records, etc)
- Planning documents (applications etc)
- Court records (cases)

4.6 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service gained full accreditation on 4 October 2018. It is a reiterative process and the service is continuously monitored for any significant changes which might affect its suitability as a Place of Deposit. The only outstanding element of the Accreditation Scheme currently is a formally agreed Forward Plan.

4.7 In order to obtain Archive Accreditation, the following policies were submitted with the service's accreditation application:

- ***GMALSP Local Studies and Archive Accessioning and Cataloguing Standards***
This standard lays out in detail how new material should be accessioned. It then details how services should catalogue material, in a manner that fits within widely accepted archival standards and guidelines.
- ***GMALSP Deaccessioning and Reappraisal Policy***
Outlines agreed processes for how archival material is deaccessioned and reappraised. Deaccessioning refers to the permanent removal (either by disposal, or by transfer to a more suitable organisation) of archival material from a repository's holdings, for example in cases of duplication, or where material may be more appropriate in another organisation. Reappraisal is the process of reassessing the retention value of records, and identifying candidates for deaccessioning.
- ***Tameside Collections Information Plan***
Lays out the service's information process for archives, from the point of their deposit at the archives, through accessioning, to cataloguing.
- ***Tameside Preservation and Security Policy***
Outlines how the service keeps its holdings secure, and ensures that they are not subject to conditions or actions which may harm them. It also outlines the conditions in which holdings should be stored, as well as the service's preservation procedures. Preservation refers to the protection of materials by minimising chemical and physical deterioration, in order to extend the life of records.
- ***GMALSP Policy on Digitising and Cataloguing Images***
Sets out procedures for digitising (producing a digital copy of an analogue object) of photographic prints, slides and negatives. It also sets out guidelines for their subsequent storage and cataloguing.
- ***GMALSP Statement of Purpose and Memorandum of Understanding***
Sets out the relationship between the members of GMALSP, as well as the purpose of GMALSP, and how it is run.
- ***GMALSP Development Plan***
Sets out the priorities and key actions for GMALSP to undertake between 2017 and 2020.
- ***Tameside Planning Document***
Short-term 1 year action plan for Tameside Local Studies and Archives, produced in lieu of a full forward plan in order to comply with Accreditation requirements.

- **GMALSP Access Policy**

Outlines the ways in which access to archive and local studies collections is provided and enhanced, ensuring that accessibility is maximised for all users and potential users, whilst still complying with necessary access restrictions.

- **Tameside Policy on Access Restrictions**

Outlines necessary access restrictions, and the legislation behind them. The policy sets out closure periods, exceptions, and the reasons behind them.

- **GMALSP Digital Preservation Policy**

Sets out procedures for the accessioning of, preservation of, and access to digital records.

- 4.8 These policies were created jointly with GMALSP and were accepted by the TNA. They represent best practice and value for money. However, part of GMALSP's role is to continuously review these policies to ensure they meet current best practice. This means that a new digital preservation policy is in development which can be applied across Greater Manchester to ensure the ongoing safe and best methods for safeguarding digital records as Archives move from holding predominantly paper based records to increasingly digital records.
- 4.9 Failure of a service to meet the standards set out by the National Accreditation Scheme managed through National Archives could result in loss of Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service status as Place of Deposit. This would mean that public records held by the service would need to be sited with another accredited Greater Manchester Archives Service. Having a Forward Plan in place as set out in the report mitigates this risk.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Consultation with service users and non-users is essential for maintaining and assessing customer satisfaction levels. It should be used to develop a service which is fit for purpose and adequately reflects the needs of its users and stakeholders.
- 5.2 In the creation of the forward plan, the service consulted on a variety of platforms and sought the views of diverse stakeholders; from staff, other service areas as well as other members of GMALPS and TNA. This also included feedback at events, comments received about the service generally, and a survey created specifically for the purpose of the Forward Plan.
- 5.3 In the forward planning survey, opinions were sought from both users and non-users. The focus was primarily on what the public want from the service – why regular users might visit and what would persuade non-users to visit the service in terms of different events. The service has also tried to better understand how aware users are of what Tameside Local Studies and Archives has to offer, and how the offer might be more effectively promoted.
- 5.4 Tameside Local Studies and Archives will need to ensure that the facilities and the 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 remains reflective of the changes and innovations of the 21st Century both in terms of the borough's demographics but also in terms of technological and digital innovations.
- 5.5 The Survey created for the Forward Plan set out 8 questions and reflected upon users' needs and why others were not engaging with the service. The online survey was available for four weeks from 16 July 2019 to the 13 August 2019, and 41 completed surveys were returned. Additional paper copies were also made available through the Local Studies and Archives Centre.

- 5.6 The results were on the whole very positive. 32 respondents had used the service before, whilst 9 had not. For the most part those who had not used the service before indicated that they had simply not had the need to.
- 5.7 Of the respondents who had used the service, one had come from the USA and had used the service to explore their local family heritage, and one respondent came to the UK from Australia annually, and used the service whenever they visited.
- 5.8 Responses to the survey also indicated that the majority of those who have used the service have a good understanding of what is on offer, and feel confident that staff will be able to assist them.
- 5.9 70% of respondents indicated that their preferred way of finding out about the holdings would be to speak to staff, whilst the other 30% would use the online catalogue and resources.
- 5.10 Asked what would persuade them to visit again, 50% of respondents indicated that a specific event that caught their eye would persuade them to come back, whilst 38% would want an exhibition they could browse without necessarily needing to visit the service for any other purpose.
- 5.11 55% of respondents would be interested in more talks on the history of specific places and areas within Tameside, and the same percentage of respondents requested talks based specifically on archive items themselves. 42% would be interested in more history themed walks.
- 5.12 The most common way that respondents found out about events was word of mouth, with leaflets and posters the second most common, and local newspapers third.
- 5.13 Comments were mostly positive, and especially praised the staff for the helpfulness and knowledge. Some comments included suggestions or specific concerns. Comments included:
- *“I find the current service excellent and the staff are knowledgeable and very helpful. The layout of the building is excellent. There is very little a cannot find when visiting the Archive Library”*
 - *“The staff are very helpful and pleasant when I visit. I always enjoy and find my visits very interesting.”*
 - *“Excellent service by friendly, knowledgeable staff.*
 - *“[I would like to see] more Belle Vue photos, Audenshaw News, more books possibly about Audenshaw past + present.*
 - *“It would be nice if it was opened more.”*
 - *“The local studies and archives section here are very good and well set out.”*
 - *My son and I were very pleased to come here. We were able to gather more information about my grandmother's (from Hyde area) family. Everyone was very helpful. Thank you so very much.*
 - *“I have nothing but PRAISE for the archive and friendly, helpful staff. Well done to all concerned.*
 - *“As I live in Australia, most questions are not applicable to me. I use the archives a few times when I am here every year. I have been on 2 or 3 historical walks and talks at the Old Chapel Dukinfield.*
 - *“Make sure it is inclusive and not everything has to be done online.”*
- 5.14 The full results of the consultation can be found in **Appendix 2**.

6. DEVELOPING THE FORWARD PLAN

6.1 A forward plan is a powerful tool for service improvements and is a key requirement for Archive Service Accreditation. It should set out the service's aims and objectives and how these are reflected in a work development plan over the required period whilst also linking to local strategies and other relevant partnerships.

6.2 Tameside Local Studies and Archives aims and objectives have been set in line with the Council's corporate plan. The forward plan further takes into consideration the aims and objectives of GMALSP and the wider obligations in relation to TNA, especially in relation to future collections care and the future proofing of the service in relation to acquiring and storing borne digital records.

6.3 Tameside Local Studies and Archives' Service's key aims are:

- **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.
- **Access to Learning:** Offering visitors engaging, inspirational and informative experiences, as well as creating a compelling offer for school groups.
- **Access to Collections:** Collect, care for, document and develop the borough's archives and provide access to them in imaginative, informative and engaging ways.

6.4 These aims are reflected in all work priorities set out in the Forward Plan 2019-2024. Three core priorities have been identified as these are essential to the continued Accreditation status of the service, and they formed key priorities when presented to the Accreditation panel in 2018. They were considered as part of the considerations when the TNA awarded the service full Accreditation in October 2018. These core priorities are:

- To maintain and develop our service offer by ensuring high quality events and activities 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.

6.5 The Action plan forms a key part of the service's forward plan. The full forward plan and action plan can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

7. FINANCE

7.1 The core budget for the Tameside Local History and Archives Service is £133,610. This funds a qualified Archivist which is a requirement for the service to be accredited. Also a 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.

- 7.2 In 2018-2019 the service brought in an additional amount of £11,400. This included £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a First World War related project involving some of the borough's veterans in research and digital skills development. The project resulted in 12 billboards across the borough commemorating local stories relating to World War One.
- 7.3 In June 2019 the service 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. If successful the project will engage up to 20 volunteers annually until 2021 to digitise, catalogue and share the photographic archive of the Tameside Reporter dating from the 1950s–2000s. This previously unseen and unique collection of 50,000 photographs of local people, places and events offers a unique insight into community life in Tameside throughout the second half of the 20th Century.
- 7.4 It is envisaged that the service will experience budget pressures as the need to store more digital records will begin to take place. Work is being undertaken to determine the likely cost of this requirement.

8. RISK

- 8.1 Place of Deposit status ensures that the Archives can continue to store public records of local interest on behalf of TNA. If the service does not continue to comply with the Accreditation status set by the TNA it is likely that the TNA will not continue to consider the service a Place of Deposit. This could jeopardise the service storing public records of local interest. To mitigate against this the service continues to work closely with TNA and a key proponent of this is to ensure a Forward Plan reflecting local strategies and priorities is formally agreed.
- 8.2 The storage of digital records will need to be addressed, if adequate server space is not procured the service is not able to fulfil its role of preserving digital records satisfactorily to ensure they survive into the future. The service currently holds some digital records on portable media, which is not an appropriate long-term solution. An ever-greater proportion of the records that were traditionally paper-based are now born-digital, and as a repository for public records our holdings will increasingly reflect this shift.
- 8.3 The service is working closely with its GMALPS partners to develop a policy which meets local needs whilst also ensuring best value for money and best practice. For the service directly this means increased server space to comply with the storage of borne digital records for the future.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Tameside Local Studies and Archives Service works closely with its Greater Manchester Local Studies and Archives Services to contribute to the Council's core priorities. It provides access to residents wanting to explore the borough's heritage, find out more about their ancestry, research military records and forms a key part of the Council's cultural programme. The service continues to strive for better inclusion and diversity in its collections whilst also adhering to the National Standards set out the TNA.
- 9.2 It has gained funding for projects working with the borough's veterans as well as some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough. It provides supportive and diverse

volunteering opportunities and provides the borough's residents with access to public records so they do not need to travel out of borough to access their local heritage and history.

- 9.3 In 2018 the service gained full Accreditation awarded by the National Archives Accreditation Scheme. Accreditation ensures that services designated as Places of Deposit for public records continue to meet appropriate standards, as laid out by TNA.
- 9.4 A viable forward plan is an essential part of an Archive Accreditation application. Whilst full accreditation has been achieved, the service will continue to be reviewed in accordance with the accreditation process. As such it is a requirement to develop a forward plan and for the plan to be formally agreed.
- 9.5 This report has set out the key elements of the Forward Plan required for the continued Accreditation of the service.
- 9.6 The forward plan has been written in consultation with TNA, GMALSP, staff and members of the public. It reflects the requirements of the TNA, the work of its partners and the needs of its users and non-users.
- 9.7 The risk in the service not having a fully agreed forward plan in place could result in the removal of full accreditation which could ultimately result in the service having its status as Place of Deposit revoked.
- 9.8 If a forward plan is agreed and formally accepted by the Council the service will remain fully compliant with the Accreditation standards as set out by the TNA.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 As set out at the front of the report.