

To Mr. Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services
By: Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities
Subject: Archive and Local History Service Development Plan
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Summary: This paper seeks agreement to a new Archive and Local History Service Development Plan.

Background:

1. In autumn 2008, we initiated a programme of consultation to inform the development of a plan of transformation for our Archives and Local History Service. That public consultation programme continued into the Spring of 2009. Alongside further research and planning we have spent the intervening period progressing the work to deliver a new History Centre for Kent in Maidstone.
2. Building work on the new Kent History and Library Centre is progressing well. Bouygues Development and KCC are working with a number of partners including Housing 21 and West Kent Housing Association to create a landmark new building in the heart of Maidstone. The Centre will bring the County's archive collection and library services from Maidstone St. Faith Street and County Central Library together under one roof making it easier for the public to access Kent's rich culture and heritage.
3. However, we have always known that in parallel to the delivery of the new History Centre, we needed to develop and implement a plan of service transformation in order to fully exploit the new building, and maximise the positive outcomes that local people derive from accessing the fabulous collections we hold.
4. Following review of our plans by Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2010 we spent the summer/autumn of 2010 consulting further with key stakeholders and as a result we are now ready to seek final approval for our Development Plan. This will allow us to ensure that the transformation of the Service is well underway by the time that the History Centre opens to the public in 2012.

Policy Context

5. Our proposals support the goals expressed in **The Vision For Kent and Towards 2010**:
 - By helping them to learn about and understand the history of their communities, we help local people come together and form strong ties with their neighbours and their area, forming stronger and safer communities.
 - Access to the history of local people and communities stimulates lifelong learning and exploration.
 - Activity of mind and body supports physical and mental health.
 - By firing people's imagination and inspiring them to get involved in a range of projects and activities we enhance the enjoyment of many lives.

6. The Development Plan supports the ambitions of **Bold Steps for Kent**:
 - By helping people improve their digital and research skills, and through a wide range of community and/or volunteering opportunities, we will help them increase their personal confidence and level of aspiration.
 - Working with local communities and voluntary organisations we will help them provide local access to their own historic collections, and enable them to share their collections across the world through a new Internet based community history network.
 - Through access to the stories of our shared past, we will help people develop strong community ties, and a sense of shared pride in and aspiration for their community.

7. This work also supports the ambitions of **Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential: A Cultural Strategy for Kent** which was endorsed by KCC Cabinet on 11th October and commended to the Kent Partnership for final approval. The strategy states: "We care passionately for our cultural heritage and invest wisely in our cultural future so that Kent is rich with opportunity, and is both a place to call home and a destination in its own right....The rich local history of an area, contributing to the maintenance and improvement of your physical surroundings are all cultural pursuits which benefit individual physical and mental health and well being. They are also activities that are instrumental in developing safe and strong communities as they encourage a sense of belonging, a greater understanding of places so that people start to care for their surroundings and to interact with their neighbours, developing social capital....We want to tell our own story about Kent by interpreting the past in a way that is relevant for today".

8. **The Library and Archive Strategy** adopted by Cabinet in April 5th April 2004 identified that one of the Service's core objectives was to "provide access to Kent's rich culture and heritage in order to foster a sense of place and community identity".

9. **The 2010/11 Library and Archive Service Annual Operating Plan** includes the target “Modernise the Archives and Local Studies Services and make it more accessible”.

Resource Implications

10. By bringing together all the archive collections that we are responsible for in the new History and Library Centre, and through further integration of the front of house, back office and management support for the Libraries and Archives Service we will reduce our annual revenue costs once the History and Library Centre is opened in 2012. This saving cannot yet be accurately predicted as work on new staffing structures is not complete and the running costs of the new centre are as yet uncertain. We have committed part of the revenue saving to help fund the new build.
11. New areas of work like the setting up of the Community History Network, will be funded from existing resources.

Consultation/Customer Impact

12. Consultation has been undertaken in two phases. Phase one involved a wide public and stakeholder consultation on the broad vision for the service and took place between September 2008 and April 2009.
13. The analysis of the feedback from this phase of the consultation overwhelmingly endorsed the vision outlined in our consultation document. (See appendix 2 for more detail of the consultation process and findings.) The feedback underlined how enthusiastic most people are to engage better with their history. At the same time respondents generally emphasised that the collections themselves and staff who help people to access them are the key resources to enable us to achieve this vision. Many people and groups wanted more information about, and access to, the material in the collections and many groups were interested in working in partnership with the service to provide this access locally. The idea of a community history network with the Archive and Local History Service at the hub, supporting local groups, was a recurring theme.
14. With this wide support for our early vision (as expressed in our consultation document “Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future”) we progressed more detailed planning and brought a more detailed vision to Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2010. With their support we moved to phase two of the consultation over the summer/autumn of 2010, having detailed discussions with a range of key stakeholder groups. Appendix 3 to this report summarises the outcome of this phase of the consultation.
15. Informed by both phases of consultation we have now produced the Kent County Council Archive and Local History Service Development Plan 2011-2015, which is presented as Appendix 1 to this report.

16. We anticipate that the necessary changes to staff roles and responsibilities will be phased in between now and 2012. Formal consultation with Unison and the staff involved will take place at the appropriate time for each phase.

17. Informed by the huge range of stakeholder feedback we have received, we have completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment and are awaiting advice as to whether further work is needed.

Recommendation

18. The Cabinet Member for Community Services is asked to:

- a. Endorse the proposed Kent County Council Archive and Local History Service Development Plan (appendix 1).
- b. Agree to the closure of East Kent Archive Centre once the collections held there have been transferred to the new Kent History Centre in Maidstone.
- c. Agree to notice being issued to the Canterbury Cathedral Archive Partnership of our intention to withdraw from the partnership once KCC collections held there have been transferred to the new Kent History Centre in Maidstone.
- d. Delegate authority to the Managing Director for Communities to:
 - make changes to the relevant parts of the library, archive and museums staff structure, creating new roles and deleting those that do not support the future vision, and reducing numbers of front of house, management and support staff, by compulsory redundancies if not achieved by redeployment, voluntary redundancy and natural wastage; and
 - review the collections policy and standard agreements with depositors to reflect the new relationships described in section 6 of the Development Plan (Appendix 1).

Background Documents:

- Appendix 1 Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future: Kent County Council Archive and Local History Service Development Plan 2011-2015
- Appendix 2 Feedback from consultation with the public September 2008 to April 2009
- Appendix 3 Feedback from consultation with key stakeholders July to November 2010

Also available online:

Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future – developing a new
Vision for Kent Archives and Local History Service – a public
consultation document published September 2008

http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/archives_and_local_history/news_from_the_archives_section.aspx

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November 2010

Appendix 1 – Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future: Kent County Council Archive and Local History Services Development Plan 2011 - 2015

1. Introduction

This document sets out the Vision for the future for Kent County Council's archive and local history services, and describes the areas of transformation which will enable us to fully exploit the rich collections in our care, and the new Kent History Centre, for the benefit of the people of Kent.

The new History Centre will be open to the public in 2012, and staff from across Libraries and Archives are already working hard to ensure that we deliver a 21st century service that matches the quality of this flagship Centre.

2. Our Vision for the Service

2.1. History has the power to change lives. No matter who you are or where you live in Kent, you and your community have a story. Learning about that story can have huge impact on our lives. Lord Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Leader of Kent County Council 1997-2005 and Chairman of English Heritage 2007-2008 is quoted as saying: "I think when people understand more about the past it helps one to have a sense of everything." The MLA and the National Archives have recognised the rich national legacy contained in our archives collections: "They have an important role to play in supporting any strategy that seeks to increase the number of people who are involved in formal and informal learning; strengthen evidenced-based research and decision making; engage young people in positive activities; develop people's skills; build sustainable communities; and improve governance and accountability."¹

2.2. Through access to the collections in our care people:

- learn about and understand their shared history and come together to forge safer and stronger communities;
- increase their digital and research skills and are inspired to seek other learning opportunities;
- keep active in mind and body, often improving their health and securing a sense of wellbeing from their developing roots and connections within their communities; and
- have fun being inspired and entertained by the stories of our shared past.

2.3. Our vision is to exploit the potential in our collections to support these aims by:

¹ Archives for the 21st century in action, 2010

- Caring better for our collections in much improved accommodation and through an enhanced programme of preservation and conservation at the new History and Library Centre for Kent.
- Improving access for all, both at the Centre and through the whole Library and Archive network and beyond, to deliver seamless access to materials that support the study of local people and communities, and increase community cohesion.
- Exploiting the opportunities created by developments in ICT to enhance the experience and widen access.
- Redefining staff and volunteer roles, and training and equipping both groups to support both the universal service, and more targeted work to introduce our collections to those who can benefit most from this contact.
- Working with community partners to help them preserve and provide access locally to their historical archive collections.
- Developing existing relationships with schools and other education and training organisations to fully exploit the potential for our local history collections to support learning for all.
- Developing new partnerships with donors and depositors to make this work sustainable.

3. The IT developments needed to underpin the Service

The following are some examples of how we can ensure that IT developments underpin the vision for the service:

3.1. Explore the Archives - documents, pictures and images from the collections available online and to download, and diaries and journals published as eBooks. For example these could include the diaries of Sir Joseph Banks (Cook's voyages to Australia) and Eva Knatchbull (12 year old in the 1870s) and the letters of Jane Austen. This content would be made more accessible through an enhanced interactive online catalogue to allow people to find material in our collections, and using wiki technology to add any information they have to our catalogues.

3.2. An enhanced website – to include:

- Who Do You Think You Are - a trace your ancestors interactive step by step online guide to researching your family history featuring famous Kent celebrities.
- General interest/learning packages, for example: "Walk the Pilgrims Way to Canterbury in 1380"; "Bomb Alley - Kent in the Second World War"; "Build a ship to fight the Armada in Sandwich"; "Learn to write like King Withred of Kent"; "How did it feel to be a Sikh arriving in Gravesend in 1950"; and other games, quizzes, podcasts and blogs.
- Find out more about the history of your local community featuring different areas in Kent with links to

relevant material in our collections and in the collections of partners in the local history community groups.

- Online research, advice and consultation services.

3.3. Kent Community History Network - a facility for local people who want to promote and look after the history of their local community together. This will include advice and support on collecting and looking after old pictures and documents. It will enable different community groups across Kent to share information and images with links to relevant websites and to other like-minded groups in Kent through forums and twitter links. See www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk for an example of the type of network we would like to establish for Kent.

3.4. An improved Archive Management System– to support the cataloguing, storage and retrieval of our collections.

3.5. Born digital material - a system to store County Council records which are only produced in electronic format and which will eventually need to be added to the County Council's historic archive eg minutes, reports etc. This would link to KCC's e-agenda and achieve smarter, more efficient working and free up physical and virtual space.

4. The Network of Delivery Points needed to deliver the Service

4.1. The new History and Library Centre for Kent is being developed in Maidstone to provide the best standards of collection care and visitor experience that our archives deserve.

4.2. We need to make this the focus for the Archive Service, supported through virtual access and by enhancing the local history collections held in local libraries across the County.

4.3. It is our intention to expand the role of the existing 12 customer service development librarians based across the County to work with local people (staff, volunteers and public) to develop these local history collections through the addition of material including facsimiles of documents held in the archives.

4.4. East Kent Archive Centre (EKAC)

4.4.1. EKAC was originally developed as a temporary overspill as we ran out of storage space at the Centre for Kentish Studies at County Hall. At the time it was envisaged that EKAC would only be needed for a short period but unfortunately it has taken longer than anticipated to deliver the new History and Library Centre. EKAC cannot deliver the standards of storage and public access that the new History Centre will offer.

4.4.2. Alongside enhanced virtual access; support for local history groups who want to preserve their local collections in the

community; and access to digital and facsimile copies in our network of local libraries; we now need to plan the transfer of the collections held at EKAC to the new History Centre in Maidstone. We have consulted with customers and depositors at EKAC.

4.4.3. We plan to close EKAC sometime in 2012, after all the collections have been transferred to the new History Centre.

4.5. Canterbury Cathedral Archive (CCA)

4.5.1. Since 1989 KCC has run the CCA in partnership with Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury Diocese, and Canterbury City Council. The majority of the collections held there are owned by our three partners.

4.5.2. We now propose to issue notice to withdraw from this partnership with effect from 2012; to transfer the small quantity of the collections owned by KCC to the History Centre when it is completed; and to relocate our conservation and reprographic service to purpose built accommodation in the new building.

4.5.3. We have discussed our proposals with all our partners at CCA and are exploring with them whether they might want to transfer any of their collections to the new centre. This would need to happen in parallel to a digitisation programme to ensure that the most popular items would continue to be available locally. Such proposals would help free up much needed space in the Canterbury Cathedral Archive.

4.5.4. In parallel we are seeking to develop new ways of working together to link the collections in the partners' care, and ensure that they are fully exploited to the benefit of local people. The joint KCC and Canterbury City Council redevelopment of the Beaney Institute provides a great opportunity to showcase and interpret our collections in a fully accessible and very popular Canterbury location.

4.5.5. The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral have indicated that they will continue to run an archive service at the Cathedral, and that their archive and the Canterbury Diocesan Parish collections will remain at the Cathedral Archive.

4.5.6. Whatever shape our new partnership takes, we will want to maintain good relationships with the Cathedral Archives so that the established links between the two historic archive collections can be maintained and exploited.

5. The Staff Structure needed to deliver the Service

- 5.1.** In order to deliver the service described in the vision we will need to redefine staff and volunteer roles, and train and equip both groups to enable them to fully exploit the collections in the way we want.
- 5.2.** Through this staffing review we also want to integrate the Library, Archive and Local History Services better, delivering more seamless services to the public and fully exploiting the opportunities to deliver efficiencies in the front of house, management and support teams.
- 5.3.** We also propose to integrate KCC's remaining museums development function into the new Archive and Local History Service. This will enable us to fully exploit the opportunities that exist for joint working across local heritage collections, and to ensure effective signposting of customers between us. We already have good examples of joint working with Maidstone and Canterbury Museums, and have mutually agreed to expand the range and scale of co-operative working in the future.
- 5.4.** We now propose to develop this structure further exploring all possibilities to deliver further efficiencies, drawing up draft job descriptions and person specifications, and starting consultation with staff as appropriate. The new structure will be rolled out in phases between now and 2012, as circumstances permit.

6. The Future Relationships with Depositors

- 6.1.** Our collections fall into two broad categories: those which KCC own because they have been gifted to us or we have purchased them; and those which other organisations or individuals lend to us. Nearly all these organisations or individuals do not pay any contribution to KCC for the collections they place on deposit with us. We have accepted this material in the past because we wish to enhance the collections we make available to the public.
- 6.2.** When deposited with us, material has generally not been sorted or listed. Some of the material we receive is unsuitable for deposit with us because it does not add to our existing collections or cannot be made accessible to the public. This means that we need to invest significant resources to sort and assess the material before we are able to identify which items we might wish to return to the depositors. In the past, some approaches to return items to depositors have met with negative responses as such action creates financial/storage pressures for our depositors.
- 6.3.** Assuming that we do wish to retain items from these collections, we then need to repackage, catalogue and in some cases conserve these collections. However, these collections remain in the ownership of

the depositor and can be withdrawn at any time, in some cases for private sale.

6.4. We now propose to bring our relationships with depositors to a more sustainable footing and have started a series of meetings with existing depositors to agree this change in policy. All depositors approached to date have been very supportive of our proposals.

6.4.1. We have drawn up a new collections policy states that we will only hold material that we feel adds to the collections and that can be accessed by our customers. While we have spare storage capacity, we may consider offering to house other collections on a charged for basis to deliver income to the Service.

6.4.2. With effect from the opening of the Kent History Centre we will only take on deposit new collections that meet this more robust test. This will mean that depositors will need to invest more time in sorting and listing their own collections before they offer them to us so that we can make the assessment before we take receipt and decide which parts of the collections we wish to take responsibility for.

6.4.3. We are approaching the owners of the collections already on deposit with us to plan how and when a similar retrospective exercise can be undertaken on this material. This will require them to invest some time in assisting the sorting and appraisal process. These approaches will be programmed for mutual convenience as far as possible. There is a clear expectation that for us to continue to hold on deposit any part of their collections, we will require their co-operation in this process.

6.4.4. We will also expect depositors to sign up to a revised service level agreement which will clarify what contribution will be expected of them if they withdraw collections that we have invested resources in, for example in programmes of conservation. The agreement will also set out how we can exploit the merchandising potential of their collections, and who will benefit from any income derived.

6.5. In these ways we intend to progressively rationalise the collections we hold which will both enable us to exploit better the remaining collections for the public benefit and extend the life of the current storage facility by slowing down the rate at which the collection expands.

7. Conclusion

With the building of the new Kent History Centre, we have an extraordinary, once in a generation opportunity to reshape the way that we use our historic archive collections to support the ambitions of the people of Kent. This will be

a partnership between all the people of Kent, utilising all their skills and knowledge to create safer and stronger communities, support lifelong learning, and through understanding our past, develop pride and confidence in the power of local people to change our shared future for the better.

Appendix 2 – Public Consultation Feedback Analysis – September 2008 to April 2009

type	number of responses
comment cards	49
emails/letters	14
children’s vision consultation	118
non-user questionnaires	160
meetings	52
quiz responses	131

Comment Cards

Do you agree that it benefits people and their communities to find out about the past by using Kent Archives and Local History Service?

Yes: 100% No: 0%

Do you believe that the approach described in “Understanding Our Past, Changing Our Future” would help more people to find out about the past?

Yes: 90% No: 10%

Questionnaire for Non-Users

History is important:	% of positive responses
to bring families & communities together	76%
to inspire learning	75%
to add to the enjoyment of life	67%
to keep our minds active	67%

Are you interested in doing any of the following?

Finding out about Kent’s history	64%
Finding out about the history of your house	34%
Finding out about the history of your family	69%
Finding out about the history of your local area	69%
Taking part in activities & events inspired by history	45%

Would you like to find out more about history?

at a community centre	17%
at your local library	81%
at a history or archive centre	58%
using the internet	66%

“Rewind Fast Forward” - Children’s Comment Card

I think we can make our history come alive by...

Sharing stories from the past about the people and places around us	53%
Showing the treasures from the collections in history centres to more people	61%
Finding and collecting things to keep for the future	50%
Telling stories from the past that are enjoyable, exciting or even horrible!	63%

What would make you more interested in history?

Learning more about the history of your family	55%
Learning more about the history of your local area	42%
Taking part in special events at your local history centre	47%
Using computers to explore history	53%

Selection of Comments Received

1. “History is the glue which holds communities together ...”
Sittingbourne Heritage Research Group
2. “Now people from the council estate are starting to come in too originally I think they were a bit reluctant and would just come in and hover thinking they had nothing to offer. It [the heritage centre] gives people a sense of pride and belonging in their community and local area.”
Marden Heritage Group
3. “After talks we’ve given here and elsewhere in Birchington people often say ‘I’ll never look at my village in the same way again’ – I think what we do is vital in helping people learn about their community and have more pride in it.”
Birchington Heritage Trust
4. “As a society we all learn together about the local area and its history – there’s a real community spirit within this society.”
Sandgate Society

5. "People tend to want to leave all the research to people who've got degrees but we get everyone involved so they can learn in the process – many of them get real confidence, pride and a sense of achievement from finding out something using historical sources."
Historical Research Group for Sittingbourne
6. "There is a real learning role that archives can and do provide, interpreting material for students and making it of relevance to them."
Greenwich University
7. "As I love acting I thought if there were productions of history for all ages then it could be more interesting, both for the people watching and taking part in the play and the children performing it having to learn the lines off by heart."
Brownie - Age 10 Broadstairs
8. "Get someone you're learning about, so get someone to come dressed as the famous person from the past and get everyone to ask him questions so they learn more."
Child - Age 10
9. "The university holds courses at the Cathedral Archives and Library and it is important to teach from original materials."
University lecturer
10. "People, especially older people, come to the Friday session to talk about the past and we record the memories. But they get a cup of tea and get to talk to other people and feel that they are contributing to the life of the village. It helps with their self esteem and also helps them not to feel so alone and isolated."
Smeden Local History Group
11. "We have a new volunteer who lost his job and is so enthusiastic to be helping us and finding life is not so empty and boring after all he's doing really well and much more happy and confident. He has learnt new skills which will help him in the future."
Volunteer – Marden Heritage Group
12. "I also worked with a mother and toddler group in Seasalter as part of a Sure Start project ..using personal history to try and raise expectations and identify the aspirations of the mums, one of whom couldn't read. We also used local history to give a focus for the group"
Greenwich University – community history
13. "When I was at school history was such a dull and uninspiring subject. KCC projects are bringing it all to life and encouraging more people to research."
Comment Card
14. "I get a real sense of satisfaction from researching and finding out something new about the past. I always know when I come to EKAC it's full of gems just waiting to be found. I always know I'm going to find one and sometimes I find bagfuls! And it's great to then take them back to my community to show them, the very people who it is most relevant to....."
EKAC Customer Focus Group

15. "I think what you're doing is great – you need to engage people about their local history in an upfront way."
Fremlins Walk Consultation
16. "I'm paid for 12 hours but I'm doing much more because it's so interesting and you get hooked – I thought I would probably be volunteering somewhere else so I might as well volunteer here! I have learnt so much about the local area and also about what I can do! Amazing really as I've lived in the area for most of my life ..."
Godmersham Park Heritage Centre
17. "I have completed a course on Kentish History and used CKS – it was great, so much info and so interesting and was always getting sidetracked!"
Comment Card
18. "If you want people to come to the new history centre you'd have to have a party every week! You could have a party where everyone could dress up in olden day clothes that would be cool but it might be a bit embarrassing. Yeah I'd like to dress up with my friends in the new History Centre. Could you do it so that then you could send a picture of your friends dressed up with Bluetooth? That would be good and it would get people interested in history!"
Group of 13-14 yr olds – Maidstone HOUSE
19. "You could have a fair/parade in the summer. It's all free display things in it. Act out scenes from the past and get children involved in it more."
Child - Age 11
20. "It was a great session! I really enjoyed looking through all the old documents and trying to read the handwriting. I really want to come back and learn more about my family history."
Invicta School Group
21. "You should have the confidence to let children get to grips with original documents – they love it!"
Primary School Teacher
22. "I've read with interest your consultation document. I'm delighted with the new emphasis on engaging young people with real records, and also using those records not only to teach history but also to inspire other activities such as music."
Comment Card
23. "Access needs to be welcoming, interactive and attractive to a range of ages .."
Schools History Advisor
24. "The key things are accessibility and availability."
East Kent Archive Centre - Customer Focus Group
25. "It is clear that the basic function of the Kent Archives Service has always been, and should continue to be, the preservation of the historic documents of the ancient county of Kent."
Local Historian

26. “We are struggling with organising our collections, especially on the IT side – whether to use Word or Excel. Some help and advice in that area would be great. Also something like a template we could use for arranging and organising our collections ..what fields for cataloguing and indexing.”

Loose History Society

27. “CKS is very difficult to access for some people both in terms of travelling there and parking and also understanding how everything is arranged! It’s very intimidatingwhat you need is someone there to welcome you....to put you at your ease when you first arrive.”

Historical Research Group for Sittingbourne

28. “It is important to have good catalogues and cataloguing, and to tackle cataloguing backlogs, as otherwise material could not be available for consultation.”

University Group

29. “Very important to have people and staff who know what they’re doing and who can catalogue and interpret collections.”

East Kent Archive Centre - Customer Focus Group

Appendix 3 – Key Stakeholder Consultation Feedback Analysis – July to November 2010

A total of 50 groups and organisations were sent a letter outlining the vision and proposals for the future of the service. This included all the district councils in Kent and the major history organisations and groups. Information on the vision was also posted on the relevant websites for all schools and parish councils in the county. The vision was linked to the new Kent History and Library Centre which is currently being built and which is due to open in Maidstone in 2012.

In addition a more detailed letter outlining the proposal to transfer the archive collections currently at East Kent Archive Centre (EKAC) to the new centre was sent to 115 regular users of EKAC and its 16 major depositors.

The letters asked for comments on the proposals to be sent via post or email and those sent to organisations and groups offered meetings to discuss the proposals.

In total there have so far been 21 responses and 15 meetings.

General

Comment: Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

For many people archives have been viewed as quite insular – reaching out to only a few, but the new Kent Archive Strategy recognizes that while emphasis quite rightly needs to be placed on caring for the collection, the true outcome of this is a better more people focused service. The emphasis on forging new partnerships, investing and using modern technology and breaking down silos provides a sound basis for demonstrating that archives can reach out to the many not the few.

Comment: The National Archives

We discussed your plans to focus collections and staffing at the new History Centre while increasing remote engagement through digitisation and other off-site services including a County History Network. This approach is in line with the recommendations of Archives in the 21st Century and represents good value for money in collections management and access to original material while offering an increasing level of service very local to users.

Comment: Kent Museums Group

Kent County Council's recent plan to develop a new facility for storing the County's archives is both welcome and to be congratulated. This proactive solution to a growing and inevitable need for more storage space will enable the continued collecting and protection of important evidence of our personal and collective pasts. Crucially, it will also create wider and more innovative opportunities for public engagement with that evidence – something that contributes both to historical research and to our 'sense of place' and well-being, things which underpin community cohesion.

Collections – Future Relationships with Depositors

Officers have met with their counterparts at Thanet, Dover, Shepway and Gravesham district councils to discuss the proposals for a new approach to collecting material. This would include a new system for deciding which material will be accepted and a more robust approach to appraising, collecting and accessioning archive material. There would also be a requirement that the donor/depositor of the material prepares the material (sort, weed, list etc) before it would be accepted by the Archive Service. The response was positive with many seeing the new approach as an opportunity to put records management procedures for their organisations into proper context and operation. The East Kent Districts have agreed to visit the East Kent Archive Centre to help appraise and sort their material prior to the move to Maidstone in 2012. There have also been discussions with Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Trust, Kent Archaeological Society, the Coroner's Service, Kent Museums Group, Rochester Diocese, Kent Fire Service and Maidstone Museum.

Comment: Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Trust

We are currently reorganizing the way we manage and sort all the records of the trust – the new approach to collecting material and transferring it to the archives fits with what we are planning to do with our records management procedures.

Comment: Kent History Federation

The point of a total physical centralisation of all Kentish archives I can readily understand, both because it is sensible from an economic point of view, and because it enables uniform state-of-the-art conditions for the preservation of materials.

Comment: Kent Museums Group

For a few years now, and in an era of diminishing funding for museums, the museums profession has had to make some grown-up decisions about what it can and can't collect and store on behalf of the present and future public....

Clearly, these issues need to be – and are being – addressed by KCC in a positive and constructive way during the development of this new archive facility as the transfer of material to more appropriate locations takes place, collecting policies reviewed, and procedures adopted to ensure future depositions are relevant, effective and made in such a way as to reduce unnecessary work by the Archive staff.

IT Developments needed to underpin the Service

Many of the responses related to the opportunity which new technology offers to make material from the archive and local history collections more widely available. Respondents were keen that relevant material would be copied and made available locally if collections were going to be centralised at Maidstone when the new building opens. Some groups have suggested material which could be copied and made available, and staff are now assessing and prioritising this work. Some work has already been begun with material delivered to local groups.

Staff have also begun investigating various ways of getting the material in the collections digitised and made available, including discussions with potential partners. The online

catalogue for the archives has been redesigned with some digitised images added and this will shortly be available to the public.

Comment: Kent History Federation

The universal answer to these questions is naturally digitisation and virtual accessibility.....

The consequent questions are therefore:

- prioritisation of material and speed of digitisation*
- the direction of manpower specifically to this end*
- the importance and style of indexing and cross-referencing (the usual library requirements) to indicate the current state of play- this of course also adds to the likelihood of serendipitous discoveries.*

Comment: Kent Museums Group

However, any such capital re-development also provides a useful opportunity to reassess previous practice in areas such as collecting and to look forwards to enhancing digital and online access in these modern times and it is clear from the document that the Archives Service is using every means to fulfill its role and vision and to provide a sustainable service.

Comment: North West Kent Family History Society

It is important that free access to the public at all Kent Libraries is provided to the indexes and copies of the original records held on any 'Pay per View' site.

... also that any restrictions placed on any other body copying and using the original material held at the Archives is kept to a minimum. That any such period of time is made public. In our view the publishing of this aspect of any agreement does not interfere with any commercial confidentiality. They are public documents held in trust by the archives and any such restriction should be in the public domain.

Network of Delivery Points needed to deliver the Service

Everyone who we asked about a Kent Community History Network responded positively. This was seen as both a virtual and real network and there were suggestions that the network should include all history organisations in the county including commercial operators such as Dickens World and the forthcoming Dreamland Heritage Park. The idea of producing copies of material in the collections which could then be made available either via the internet or through local outlets such as libraries, local history groups and museums was a recurring theme.

Comment: Kent Museums Group

One very important outcome of this development process is the lead role KCC is taking in forming a new Community History Network – a long overdue progression towards a more unified and coordinated heritage sector across the County. Kent Museums Group will be delighted to be involved in this very important development as it will further connect our members to like minded individuals and organisations who share common goals; many

organisations, including ours, have been remiss in not working more closely together and KCC's promotion of such a network indicates a strong support for the wider community and those of us who seek to preserve our material culture and its associated evidence for future generations.

East Kent Archive Service

In all there have been 4 responses from customers to the letter sent out in July specifically relating to the transfer of collections from EKAC. In addition there were some customer comments specific to the centre during the previous consultation. Staff have also contacted and met with colleagues from the 3 district councils whose collections we hold on deposit at EKAC, and are in correspondence with Hythe, Lydd and Sandwich Town Councils. Discussions have also begun with the Confederation of Cinque Ports regarding their records currently stored at EKAC.

In general the customer comments indicate that customers would prefer the centre to stay open but that they recognise that the premises is not ideal for storing and providing access to historic collections. They appreciate that the new history and library centre in Maidstone will be a far better place in which to do this but emphasise that it will be hard for people in East Kent to access and that copies of the most popular material should be provided locally in libraries and to local groups. They also recognise that KCC is putting a significant amount of investment into the new building in a difficult economic environment.

Shepway and Thanet District Councils have given approval to transfer their records to the new building. Dover are taking the proposal to their Cabinet. As mentioned above all these district councils have agreed to help sort their collections prior to the proposed move and some of that work is now underway. They have noted the fact that there were only 718 visits to the archive during 2009-2010.

Before this latest round of consultation Sandwich Town Council had indicated that they would be taking their records back to the Guildhall in Sandwich. However, during more recent discussions representatives have indicated that they would be willing for the records to move to Maidstone as long as copies of some of the material can be provided locally.

The Confederation of Cinque Ports have indicated that they would have no objections to their material moving to the new centre although one of their members, Faversham, defers from this view and would prefer the material to remain at EKAC. A formal decision will be sought in the new year.

Comment: EKAC Customer

Unfortunately, I shall be unable to make use of it [the new Kent History and Library Centre] in person, as, like so many of we older history buffs, the thought of coping with the journey to Maidstone from this outback of Kent is more than I can cope with. So my question is how soon will the material you are taking from Canterbury Cathedral and EKAC be available on line for local history resources like ours?

.....I feel that as a community we'll benefit greatly from the proposed centralisation of holdings and collective engagement of community networks, which will facilitate wider access to source material (inside and outside Kent), professional/academic expertise and greater utilisation of the opportunities presented by IT/internet. This can only benefit

historians (professional and amateur alike) and enable all of us in Kent to enjoy and celebrate our rich heritage.

Comment: The National Archives

In particular, we are pleased to note the plans to close East Kent Archives and transfer its material to Maidstone. As you know, we have been content to approve the centre as a temporary measure to ease overcrowding at the Centre for Kentish Studies, but its approval expires this year. Given low visitor numbers and some problems with the building's suitability for the full range of archival work, its replacement is a positive step.

Canterbury Cathedral Archives

We have discussed with all our partners at the Cathedral Archives our current proposals to withdraw from the 1989 partnership agreement and transfer KCC-owned collections from the Cathedral Archives to the new centre in Maidstone. Our existing partners at Canterbury are: Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury Diocese and Canterbury City Council.

We are also exploring with our partners any desire on their parts to transfer any of their collections to the new centre alongside a digitisation programme to ensure that the most popular items would continue to be available locally. Such proposals would help free up much needed space in the Canterbury Cathedral Archive.

In parallel we are seeking to develop new ways of working together to link the collections in the partners' care, and ensure that they are fully exploited to the benefit of local people. The joint KCC and Canterbury City Council redevelopment of the Beaney Institute provides a great opportunity to showcase and interpret our collections in a fully accessible and very popular Canterbury location. We propose to move KCC's archive and local history conservation and reprographic team from Canterbury to much improved accommodation at the new centre in Maidstone.

Comment: Canterbury Cathedral Dean and Chapter

We would be sorry to see the termination of the 1989 agreement but if we are given notice that KCC wish to end it, we will plan to make our own arrangements to continue an archive service within the Cathedral Precinct.

We are in discussion with all partners to the 1989 agreement about which collections might be moved to the new centre in Maidstone and which retained in Canterbury. It has already been decided that the archive of the Dean and Chapter and the Canterbury Diocesan Parish collections will remain at the Cathedral Archive.

Comment: Canterbury City Council

Canterbury City Council supports the principles of the new Library and History Centre to provide greater openness and accessibility to archival records. CCC officers are considering the offer from KCC to house our archive records in the new building and are also in negotiations with the Dean and Chapter regarding other options. We will make our recommendations to members in due course for a decision.

Staff Structure Needed to deliver the Service

There have been regular updates to all KCC archive staff and to library staff at Springfield and Maidstone Libraries, with regard to the developing proposals for more integrated front of house, back office and management roles, while retaining specialist roles and professional expertise where appropriate.

There have also been discussions with Maidstone Museum and the Renaissance Hub at Chatham Historic Dockyard regarding the possibility of more joint working in the future.

Comment: North West Kent Family History Society

'Staff that are well trained and knowledgeable of the Archives holdings are essential. This should not be used as an excuse to reduce staffing levels. Especially experienced and knowledgeable staff. Nor should the process be used as an excuse to use less experienced staff in their place'

Comment: Maidstone Museum

'There are obvious areas where we could work more closely in the future which would be of mutual benefit .. collections work, digitisation, schools work and outreach are the ones that immediately come to mind'

List of organisations and people contacted as part of phase two of our consultation process

The 12 District Councils
Kent Museums Group
Kent History Federation
Kent Archaeological Society
Kent Family History Society
North West Kent Family History Society
Dover Museum
Maidstone Museum
Sir John Lushington
Viscount De L'Isle
The Stanhope Trustees
Mr & Mrs Hollingsbee
Countess Mountbatten
Dean & Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral
Rochester Diocese
Canterbury Diocese
The National Archives
Romney Marsh Research Trust
Confederation of Cinque Ports
East Kent Federation of Women's Institutes
Dover and Deal Methodist Circuit
Old Parosians' Association
British Records Association
Rochester Diocesan Mothers Union
Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Trust
East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation

Eastern & Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust
Giles Adey, Kent Coroners
Her Majesty's Court Service (Kent)
Medway Magistrates Court
Hythe Town Council
Lydd Town Council
New Romney Town Council
Sandwich Town Council
Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre
Kent Schools – via ClusterWeb
Parish Councils – via Parish News