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| Minutes of The National Archives' Board | | THE |
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| Held on 25 May 2021 at 13:00 via Video Conference (VC) | | ARCHIVES |

Present:

Lesley Cowley (LC - Chair) Chair of The National Archives' Board
Sonia Cargan (SC) Non-executive Board Member (left the meeting at the conclusion of item 9)
Claire Feehily (CF) Non-executive Board Member
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement
Neil Curtis (NC) Chief Operating Officer
Paul Davies (PD) Operations Director
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections (absent for items 4 to 8)
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Alex Forbes (AF) Head of Government Services (Item 8)
Mike Kostyn (MK), Interim Head of Finance (Item 6)
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Head of Licensing, Publishing and Digitisation (Item 4)
Mark Newman (MN) Head of Estates & Facilities (Item 9)
Andrew Payne (AP) Head of Education and Outreach (Item 9)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office
Senior Project and Business Change Manager (Item 9)

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| 1.0 | <u>Welcome / Introductions / Apologies / Declarations of Interest</u> |
| 1.1 | VJ submitted apologies for being absent for the middle part of the meeting (items 4-8), owing to a diary clash. SC submitted apologies for leaving the meeting early, owing to a diary clash. |
| 1.2 | LC welcomed RP to his first meeting as a Non-executive Board Member and incoming Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. Introductions were made. |
| 1.3 | There were no declarations of interest. |
| 2.0 | <u>Minutes / Matters Arising / Action Log</u> |
| 2.1 | Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 were approved as a correct record. |

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| 2.2 | There were no matters arising. |
| 2.3 | The Board reviewed and noted the actions log. |
| 3.0 | <p><u>Executive Team Update</u></p> <p>3.1 The Board received an update on Executive Team activities.</p> <p><u>Executive Team Update Report</u></p> <p>3.2 JJ provided a verbal update on a potential partnership project with the Parliamentary Archives. He agreed to keep the Board updated on developments.</p> <p>3.3 VJ left the meeting at this point.</p> <p>3.4 LF provided a verbal update on the Section 46 Code of Practice.</p> <p>3.5 The Board received an update around issues with the website availability and the steps being taken to investigate and manage this situation.</p> <p>3.6 There was a discussion on the latest COVID-19 alert in the London Borough of Hounslow and the potential impact upon staff. The COVID-19 Response Team has plans in place should the London Borough of Richmond also be affected and were keeping a watching brief on the impact of staff travel restrictions upon our public services.</p> <p>3.7 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the update; (ii) Looked forward to receiving a paper on the potential partnership with the Parliamentary Archives at the July meeting; and (iii) Received assurance and endorsed the approach to manage the website issue. <p><u>1921 Online Census – RAG Update</u></p> <p>3.8 The Board was invited to note the update on the 1921 Census programme and discuss RAG ratings, progress and risks identified.</p> <p>3.9 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed and noted the project update and the RAG rating position; and (ii) Received assurances that we have a high degree of confidence and understanding of the supply chain for the delivery of the project and that adequate mitigations were in place to manage risks. |
| 4.0 | <u>Non-Executive Board Members' Updates</u> |

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| 4.1 | Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations. |
| 4.2 | LC reported on the Public Chair's Forum where the strategic impact of COVID-19 and collaboration tools for hybrid meetings was discussed; and also the DCMS Chairs and CEO's meeting, where the Spending Review and making capital bids to update old equipment in order to deliver the Government's Greening Commitments were discussed. She also reported on her participation in recent Executive-level interviews. |
| 4.3 | MR noted his meeting with the consultants working on The National Archives Trust's funding strategy. |
| 4.4 | RS provided an update on the Parliamentary Restoration and Renewal Committee and that the work of The National Archives in relation to secondary legislation had been recognised. |
| 4.5 | SC noted her induction meeting with VJ and the Archives Sector Development team on the support The National Archives provides to the archives sector. Her interview in the April issue of the staff Talk magazine was noted and praised. |
| 4.6 | CF reported on her meeting with RP to coordinate his input into this morning's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) meeting, which he was unable to attend owing to a diary clash; and participation and input in the Annual Report and Accounts review meeting along with Robert Milburn. |
| 4.7 | RP noted his induction meetings with various Executive and Non-executive Board Members and thanked PD for taking him on a tour of Kew. |
| 4.8 | RP and CF both reported on the DCMS ARC Chair's Forum, which had discussed the risk management framework, emerging risks and fraud-awareness; emphasis from NAO on transparency and accountability on how COVID-19 crisis funding has been used; and useful insights from the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) on business continuity and organisational resilience. |
| | <p><u>Nominations and Governance Committee</u></p> |
| 4.9 | LC reported on the 18 May meeting which had considered end-of-year reviews for Executive Directors and senior management succession planning, further discussions on the latter would be taking place at the September meeting. |
| 5.0 | <p>Update from Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p><u>Chair's Verbal Update</u></p> |
| 5.1 | <p>CF provided a verbal update on the Audit and Risk Committee meeting that took place earlier in the day. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-end meeting with Internal Auditors – The Committee received positive feedback and |

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| | <p>assurance from BDO, Internal Auditors. The overall score was at risk of moving into an amber rating and required monitoring. Advisory reports were good, particularly on the Digital Strategy, which would be shared with Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and COVID-19 Risk Registers – The Committee thanked PD for the methodology and noted a high degree of evidence and assurance around our risk management arrangements; however it noted that horizon scanning of emerging risks could be improved. • Terms of Reference of the Committee – The Committee approved these with some amendments. The final version would be presented to Board for approval. • Risk Management Policy – The Committee made amendments to Section 5 – Information Risk. The Policy was being shared with Board to ensure members are aware of their roles and responsibilities in this area (see para 11.8 of the minutes below). • Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21 (see also minutes relating to Item 7 below) – The Committee praised the level of preparedness and integration between the front and back end of the report. Subject to receipt of the staff and pensions data from MyCSP the land and buildings valuation report, and the Audit Completion Report, the Committee was inclined to approve the report via write round for recommendation to Board and the Principal Accounting Officer for sign off. <p><u>Draft Annual Report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee</u></p> <p>5.2 The Board received the Audit and Risk Committee Chair’s draft annual report 2020-21, which provided a summary of the business and activities of the Committee during the reporting period.</p> <p>5.3 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Received and noted the verbal update and draft annual report from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee; (ii) Noted that a copy of the Internal Audit Report on the Digital Strategy would be circulated to it out-of-committee; (iii) Noted the Committee’s view that horizon scanning of emerging risks could be improved; (iv) Noted the final version of the Committee’s terms of reference would be circulated out-of-committee for write round approval; and (v) Was asked that members familiarise themselves with their roles and responsibilities in respect of risk management, as set out in the updated policy. |
| <p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> | <p><u>Corporate Reports</u></p> <p><u>March Financials</u></p> <p>The Board received the March financial report, which presented a surplus and noted the Finance team were currently working with the National Audit Office to finalise the year-end accounts (see minutes relating to item 7 below).</p> <p>RP sought clarification on the nature of the month-by-month variances pertaining to legislation</p> |

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| 6.3 | <p>services, income from commercial licensing and staffing costs, which was provided.</p> <p>The Board noted the March financial report.</p> |
| 7.0 | <p><u>Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21</u></p> <p>7.1 The Board was invited to review and comment on the latest draft of the Annual Report and Accounts 2021-21 and noted the outstanding work. The Board also received an update on the production timetable.</p> <p>7.2 The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Asked that the comments made in Convene be incorporated into the Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21; (ii) Noted it still had a week to submit further comments on the front-end performance narrative of the report; (iii) Noted that further work was required: particularly disclosure of salary, pension and compensation information and the building valuation report, together with final design and professional proofreading; (iv) Noted the Audit Completion Report (ACR) was expected 14 June; (v) Noted that the final typeset designed report will be circulated for ARC and Boards' write round approval once the ACR has been received; (vi) Received assurance that we were still on-track to lay the report in Parliament before the Summer Recess; and (vii) Asked that an updated timetable be circulated to it out-of-committee for information and assurance. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB/NC</i></p> |
| 8.0 | <p><u>Progress Update on the 20-Year Rule</u></p> <p>8.1 The Board received a report setting out progress on the 20-year rule, including the key findings of the annual Information Management Report (IMR), which monitors compliance by public record bodies with the Public Records Act.</p> <p>8.2 LF introduced the item and noted that whilst the Government, as a whole, remains unlikely to meet the policy intent of the 20-year rule, the levels of lawful compliance with the Public Records Act were reassuringly high and the Government's holdings are in a controlled state, supported by systematic data collection, and with credible plans in place for dealing with the processing of legacy records. Departments expected COVID-19 to have set back their compliance activity by up to 12 months.</p> <p>8.3 The Board noted the key activities of The National Archives to support government departments with compliance with the 20-year rule and received assurance that we were doing all we can in this area and that the Secretary of State and Ministers were aware of the position.</p> |

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| <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p> <p>8.6</p> <p>8.7</p> | <p>In response to a question by RS on staff turnover and training relating to good record management, AF reported this varied across departments. Some of the issues with collections held at The National Archives relate back to poor record keeping by departments; more generally, turnover tends to be at senior level and was low amongst information management staff. Many departments were also bringing in contractors to manage the work and there is evidence that the quality of record keeping by them is higher.</p> <p>In response to a question by LC on born-digital records, LF noted that some departments were well advanced and moving to Cloud-based services for sensitivity reviews and the selection of records for transfer. JS added that the US National Archives and Records Administration has taken a decision that after December 31 2022, it will no longer accept new transfers of permanent or temporary analog records to the fullest extent possible. The development of the Transfer Digital Records (TDR) service would make the transfer process into The National Archives easier.</p> <p>VJ re-joined the meeting at this point.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Welcomed the update and noted the report; (ii) Received assurances on the activities of The National Archives to support government departments on compliance with the Public Records Act; and (iii) Noted we had finite storage space and agreed the Government's 'levelling up' agenda would be considered in the development of our long-term storage strategy. |
| <p>9.0</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> | <p><u>Board Effectiveness Action Plan</u></p> <p>Following discussion of the results of the 2020-21 Board Effectiveness Self Assessment Survey at its 22 February meeting, the Board was presented with an Action Plan focused on activities and initiatives to improve its effectiveness in 2021-22.</p> <p>The Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reminded itself that the overall self-assessment concluded that it was a well-performing and effective Board, that was keen to ensure that this continued and was potentially enhanced; (ii) Reviewed and endorsed the key themes emerging from the 2020-21 Board Effectiveness Self Assessment Survey; (iii) Asked that the Action Plan incorporate thinking around hybrid/return to in-person meetings; (iv) Subject to (iii) above, agreed the 2021-22 Board Effectiveness Action Plan; and (v) Looked forward to receiving a progress report at its October meeting. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Action by: AB</i></p> <p>SC submitted her apologies and left the meeting at the conclusion of the item.</p> |

10.0 **Learning Centre and Public Space Masterplan**

10.1 The Board received a paper setting out concept designs, full costs and proposed phasing for the development of a Learning Centre, within the context of The National Archives' Public Space masterplan, which had been agreed by the Executive Team at its meeting on 28 April.

10.2 EJA introduced the item. The Senior Project and Business Change Manager gave a detailed presentation on the Public Space Masterplan, which included elements already completed and those that were outstanding or aspirational. AP provided an update on the learning programme, which included delivering live online lessons in response to the national lockdown and development of the learning spaces at Kew to expand our offer to schools. MN outlined the budget for the works for the development of a Learning Centre, which has been broken down into two phases.

10.3 In response to a question by MR, the Board received assurances around the governance of the delivery of the project, which would be overseen by the Building Development Board.

10.4 CF inquired about developing a workforce plan to support the learning programme and noted that new models of delivery were being looked at as part of capacity building and expansion over the next five years.

10.5 The Board noted that stakeholders were being engaged on the project through the User Advisory Group and that the spaces would be sound-proofed to protect the quieter reading areas.

10.6 LC asked whether developing an online commercial proposition would conflict with the learning programme for space and resources. In response, EJA felt that both could co-exist if carefully managed and that useful insights from adult learning providers will inform the potential commercial opportunity.

10.7 The Board:

- (i) Welcomed the presentation on the Public Space Masterplan, which bought the whole concept to life;
- (ii) Asked that the potential of corporate hire to generate income be considered in the detailed design;
- (iii) Received assurances around the governance of the project;
- (iv) Suggested exploring partnerships/funding for public art in public spaces;
- (v) Endorsed the Executive Team's decisions in respect of:
 - a) The scope and budget required to deliver the Learning Centre in two phases; and
 - b) The commencement of the initial works using funds already allocated to the Learning Centre from budgets this year.
- (vi) Noted the cost for both phases and current budget provision and endorsed proposals to seek to bridge the gap; and
- (vii) Looked forward to receiving future updates on the project.

11.0 **Any Other Business**Forward Work Programme

11.1 The Board reviewed the Forward Work Programme for Board meetings.

Vote of thanks and farewell to colleagues

11.2 LC led the vote of thanks and farewell to two colleagues.

11.3 PD would be retiring from The National Archives in June. LC thanked him for his professionalism, leadership, calmness, compassion and humour and noted it was hard to envisage The National Archives without him as the two were so intrinsic. She thanked him for his excellent leadership on our COVID-19 response and wished him well for a well-earned and long and happy retirement.

11.4 In response, PD spoke about his career highlights, the privilege of being a member of this Board and praised the people and staff that make The National Archives a special place.

11.5 CF would complete her term on the Board on 31 May. LC noted that they had joined The National Archives together and how she has personally valued CF's input at Board and also her friendship. She thanked CF for her dedication, leadership and interventions as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and spoke of her care for people and compassion. On behalf of the Board, she wished CF every success in her new portfolio of roles.

11.6 In response, CF gave a powerful and moving speech about what makes The National Archives a special place. She reflected on her own Irish history and how similar stories are curated here for future generations to enjoy. A copy of CF's speech has been kept on file for the records.

11.7 There was a round of applause for both PD and CF.

Items to note

11.8 The Risk Management Policy was received and noted.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 16.40