

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE
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Held on 24 January 2023 at 10:00 at The National Archives, Kew and via Video Conference (VC)		ARCHIVES

Present:

Andrew Wathey (AW - Chair) Chair of The National Archives' Board
Sonia Cargan (SC) Non-executive Board Member
Rommel Pereira (RP) Non-executive Board Member
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement
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
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Commercial Director
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director
Aaron Smith (AS) Corporate Services Director

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Product Manager, Digital Services (Item 7)
Catherine Elliot (CE) Head of Digital Services (Item 7)
Head of Private Office (Item 3)
Tina Morton (TM) Interim Head of Archive Sector Development (Item 4)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office
Senior Designer, Digital Services (Item 7)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Neil Curtis, Chief Operating Officer and Andrea Metcalf, Director of People, Inclusion and Change.
- 1.2 RP reported that on 1 January 2023 he had been appointed as Non-executive Director of Supply Chain Coordination Limited. There were no further declarations of interest.

2.0 Business Plan

- 2.1 The Board received a paper setting out drafts for a refreshed version of The National Archives strategic vision, *Archives for Everyone*, and its accompanying four-year plan (the latter for agreement with Ministers as set out in our Framework Document). Following previous discussions at Board, the draft presented retains much of the language of the 2019 version, with examples of inclusion, entrepreneurship and disruption at its heart, but with these recast as 'standards' and the proposed adoption of three 'lenses': collections, connection and custodianship.

- 2.2 Overall, the draft was well received and positive comments were made around its framing, accessibility and level of detail. Some changes were required to the language to balance public accessibility and official terminology.
- 2.3 There was a discussion around metrics and how ambitious they were. Following debate, it was agreed that these should be set out in an accompanying document underpinning the four year business plan. Members also queried the apparent absence of certain projects from the document, noting the importance of signalling key organisational ambitions even if elements of their execution remained to be worked out; and of extending The National Archives' educational ambitions and reach beyond schools to higher education and research institutions.
- 2.4 There was also a discussion of balancing The National Archives' statutory responsibilities and its value added activities that bring collections to new audiences. Risks to the digital public record and the transformation required to effect change in this area were also noted.
- 2.5 The Board:
- (i) Welcomed the vision and generally endorsed the direction of travel and ambitions of the four year plan;
 - (ii) Agreed that some further work was required and asked that the Executive Team consider the comments raised above;
 - (iii) Agreed that an updated draft be presented to the March meeting, alongside the draft 2023-24 Business Priorities and proposed budget, noting that consideration by Ministers and publication may be slightly delayed and take place in the early months of the new financial year; and
 - (iv) Agreed to hold a further discussion on metrics at a meeting in the near future.

Action by: SW

3.0 Framework Document

- 3.1 HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office have been delivering a programme of Government reform to uniform standards across arm's length bodies (ALBs). Following the publication of a new set of templates for framework documents between ministerial Government departments and different types of ALBs, The National Archives has been working with its sponsoring ministerial department, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)¹ on its own framework document. The latest draft was presented to Board for review and endorsement ahead of its submission to HM Treasury for final approval.
- 3.2 The Board welcomed the document. Lines of questioning related to areas of potential conflict around the Keeper's responsibilities under the Public Records Act and as Principal Accounting Officer under Managing Public Money, and assurances were provided that these had been comfortably addressed within the draft Framework Document. The Board also noted the changes in the non-executive Board member appointments process, with the exception of the Independent Member of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

¹ **Post meeting note:** On 7 February the Government announced that DCMS would be renamed the Department of Culture, Media and Sport following a restructure of the digital portfolio.

3.3 The Board:-

- (i) Welcomed the document and congratulated and thanked the Head of Private Office (HoPO) on the work that has gone into getting it to this stage;
- (ii) Agreed the draft Framework Document for submission to HM Treasury for final approval; and
- (iii) Noted that the Document may need updating following the conclusion of the external Board effectiveness review in May, and that the Terms of Reference of the Board and its sub-committees will also require updating to reflect both activities.

Action by: HoPO/AB

4.0 Archives Sector Leadership Model

4.1 The Board received a paper outlining a new approach by The National Archives to its leadership of the archives sector, reflecting sector need and input. The approach will form a framework for The National Archives' activity, structure, partnerships and investment in this part of its role, with the purpose of enabling and supporting a modern, inclusive, strong and sustainable archives sector.

4.2 In introducing the item, VJ reported that a more detailed action plan and also a communications plan would be developed to underpin the vision, noting that internal socialisation of the ambitions needed to take place first.

4.3 In response to a question around reactions of the sector, the Board noted that the *Archives Unlocked* Steering Group was involved in the consultation in the development of the new approach and that the latest version would be presented to them along with the communications plan.

4.4 JJ suggested reviewing the *Archives Unlocked* strategy in line with the new four year Business Plan and The National Archives' new approach to archive sector leadership.

4.5 The Board:

- (i) Supported the advocacy and partnership working approach to sector leadership, particularly working with professional associations;
- (ii) Endorsed the new approach for leadership of the archives sector;
- (iii) Noted that the approach will be put to Ministers for approval before launch and implementation; and
- (iv) Requested an update on the outward facing grants approach.

Action by: VJ/AB

5.0 Executive Team Updates

5.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.

- 5.2 LF provided a verbal update on planned Civil Service industrial action and management's response, noting that measures were in place to open the building to the public safely on strike days. The Board received assurance that a good level of planning was in place and risks, particularly around JJ's responsibilities as King's Printer for Acts of Parliament were being managed. The Board also noted the impacts of travel disruption (tube/rail strikes and petrol price increases) upon staff.
- 5.3 EJA provided an update on the Clore Learning Centre, noting the project was slightly behind schedule. She also sighted the Board on a number of initiatives within the visitor experience programme and welcomed MR's offer of advice on front of house services.
- 5.4 The Board:
- (i) Noted the report and updates; and
 - (ii) Agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee should be delegated oversight of risks to our institutional income streams.

Action by: NC/RP

6.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates

- 6.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 6.2 All NEBMs had attended the extraordinary Nominations and Governance meeting that morning.
- 6.3 RP noted that the current Internal Audit contract would be coming to an end in May and would be out to tender imminently. The recruitment of an Independent Audit and Risk Committee member proved unsuccessful and this role would be re-advertised in the spring. Interim arrangements were discussed, including inviting AW to attend meetings, which he agreed to do. PR also agreed to share insights on digital procurement from another Board he sits on.
- 6.4 RS noted joining the Friends of The National Archives and praised the Treason exhibition.
- 6.5 SC also noted seeing the exhibition and spending a day with AM on developing the People Strategy.
- 6.6 AW noted a meeting with the DCMS Public Appointments Team to discuss CEO and other Board member appointments and provided an update on the external Board effectiveness review procurement. He noted meetings with a number of higher education institutions and RCUK who were interested in visiting The National Archives. He also noted a recent publication on Guillaume de Machaut, which similarly to The National Archives' recent work on Chaucer, demonstrated how archives can change views on major literary figures.
- 6.7 The Board noted the updates.

7.0 Update on Project ETNA

- 7.1 The Board received a paper providing an update on Project ETNA, which is about developing a new website that allows The National Archives to achieve the ambitions of *Archives for Everyone* and provide a service that people can find, meets user's needs, and works well in a wide variety of contexts. The paper also set out the approach to delivery and issues with delivering the project, including difficulties with recruitment and retention of people with digital skills impacting the delivery model, scope, timelines and costs.
- 7.2 Lines of questioning related to the management of the trials and ensuring we engaged new audiences in testing the user research function, as well as existing users, including archivists. The Board received assurance that this will be done during the Public Beta phase and that discussions were taking place with colleagues in Archives Sector Development to expand the catalogue by including records held by other archives. Assurances were also provided in relation to the migration from 'Discovery' to the new platform.
- 7.3 The Board:
- (i) Noted the challenges with delivering Project ETNA;
 - (ii) Reconfirmed its commitment to continue to deliver the project as a priority and to factor this into business and resource planning for 2023-24; and
 - (iii) Noted that it would be kept updated on progress via the corporate performance monitoring and reporting process, and with periodic project updates.

8.0 October and November Management Accounts

- 8.1 The Board received the October and November Financial Reports, which presented that the full year forecast was in line with budget and that variances related to the timings of the projects. The December Management Accounts, as well as the 9+3 Financial Forecast would be circulated to Board out-of-committee.
- 8.2 The Board:
- (i) Received and endorsed the October and November Financial Reports;
 - (ii) Noted the key areas of risks to the budget;
 - (ii) Noted that the December Management Accounts and the 9+3 Financial Forecast Report would be circulated out-of-committee; and
 - (iv) Noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would be presented with an update on the end-of-year accounting position, including the surfacing of any specific accounting treatments and outstanding issues.

Action by: NC/AB

Post Meeting Note: The December Management Accounts were uploaded to Convene on 27 January and the 9+3 Financial Forecast Report was uploaded on 14 February for Board's out-of-committee consideration. No comments were received and both items have been recorded as received and endorsed by the Board.

9.0 Risk Registers

9.1 The Board received the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and the Ukraine Risk Register for review and noted that the Executive Team was considering the dissolution of the latter. There were three new risks and two emerging risks within the CRR, which would be discussed further with the Audit and Risk Committee on 2 February.

9.2 Noting the number of interrelated items on the risk registers and the challenges around recruitment and capacity and general morale amongst civil servants, the importance of prioritising workforce wellbeing was noted.

9.3 The Board:

- (i) Noted and endorsed the two Risk Registers.

10. Q3 Strategic Business Priorities

10.1 The Board received a performance update on the Q3 Strategic Intents business priorities and their RAG ratings.

10.2 The Board:

- (ii) Noted and endorsed the Q3 Strategic Intents business priorities update and endorsed the RAG ratings and commentary.

11.0 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts Project Team

11.1 The Board received a report setting out the high-level lessons learned from the 2021-22 production process of the Annual Report and Accounts. The report also set out the project team responsible for delivery and the production timetable for producing the 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts.

11.2 The Board:

- (i) Noted the risks and issues, including finalisation of the audit dates with NAO; and
- (ii) Reviewed and approved the production schedule and target laying date of 13 July 2023.

12.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

12.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.

12.2 The Board reviewed the Actions Log.

13.0 Any Other Business

Forward Work Programme

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

POST MEETING NOTE: Following an internal review of portfolios, the special Nominations and

Governance Committee meeting held on 24 January 2023 endorsed management's decision to merge the Corporate Services Directorate with the Chief Operating Officer function. Subsequently, AS departed from The National Archives on 31 January 2023. The Board wished to record its thanks to AS and best wishes for the future through this formal record.

Items for information

- 13.2 The Board received and noted one item for information: the draft minutes of the 7 December 2022 Audit and Risk Committee.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 13.50