

Minutes of The National Archives' Board		THE	
		NATIONAL	
Held on 26 April 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 (from item 5 onwards via VC)
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement
Neil Curtis (MC) Chief Operating Officer
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Public Records Access and Government Services (via VC)
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Commercial Director
Andrea Metcalf (AM) Director of People, Inclusion and Change
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:

Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Head of Strategic Insights (Items 2-3)
Marie Twomey-McLeod (MTM) Head of Finance (Item 12)
Governance Coordinator (Item 5)

1.0 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 AW welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Valerie Johnson (VJ), Director of Research and Collections and Sam Whaley, Head of CEO's Office and Strategy. Apologies for lateness were received from RP, owing to a diary clash.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 Storage Strategy

- 2.1 The Board received a paper providing an update on the development of The National Archives' medium-term records storage strategy, to ensure we have the appropriate arrangements in place for additional storage capacity beyond mid-2025. Given that our current contract with Deepstore expires in June 2035, the paper proposed the medium-term as a ten-year period, from mid-2025 to mid-2035 and proposed several options for exploration. The paper also set out detailed projections for storage capacity, which was largely being driven by requirements

relating to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Service Personnel Records transfer project and the anticipated transfer of the Parliamentary Archives.

- 2.2 In introducing the paper, LF provided an update on current activity, including ongoing discussion with potential partners, and an initial discussion with DCMS to inform a programme of work to approach public bodies with existing and spare storage capacity to investigate the potential of a shared service model.
- 2.3 Assurances were provided that the project governance of the medium term storage strategy will lie with the Estates Strategy Committee, which is a sub-group of the Executive Team and there was agreement that the governance framework for oversight of major capital project by the NEBMs would be developed.
- 2.4 The Board generally welcomed the paper, noting that the challenges of the task ahead were well set out. Particular reference was made to the timing of the review of the BS 4971 standard for archival storage and the costs of securing a storage facility that meets the standard compared to Deepstore (which had natural conditions for the storage of documents). The Board also welcomed that a variety of options were being looked at and suggested exploring Local Authority partnerships, who may have suitable assets.
- 2.5 The Board
- (i) Welcomed and received the offsite records storage update, with a focus on medium-term strategy;
 - (ii) Noted the progress made to date on discussions with potential partners and reviewed the analysis set out in the paper;
 - (iii) Endorsed the next steps set out in the report of (i) an options appraisal with outline costings to be presented to Board in September to inform decision-making on the optimum medium-term solution(s); and (ii) subject to agreement of (i), the anticipated timetable for contracts and procurements to commence in quarter 1 of the 2024 calendar year; and
 - (iv) Agreed to develop the project governance framework to include appropriate oversight by the NEBMs/Board.

Action by: LF/AB

3.0 Partnership Project Update

- 3.1 The Board received an update on progress of discussions with potential partners. This would be a key means by which The National Archives might also meet its long-term storage challenges.
- 3.2 The governance around the potential partnership project and oversight by NEBMs also required developing.
- 3.4 The Board:-
- (i) Welcomed the paper and noted the progress made to date on discussions;
 - (ii) Received and welcomed the analysis set out in the paper and thanked the Head of Strategic Insights for their work;

- (iii) Endorsed the next steps and timescales; and
- (iv) Agreed to develop the governance framework for the project, including appropriate oversight by NEBMs/Board.

Action by: JJ/KT

4.0 People, Inclusion and Change Strategy – First discussion

- 4.1 The Board received an outline of the draft People, Inclusion and Change Strategy for a first discussion and were invited to reflect upon four questions set out in the paper around direction of travel, connections to the next 4-year business plan and organisational vision; useful metrics to monitor and track progress and insights from other organisations that would add value and enhance the strategy, including any interventions around pay, hybrid working, and resourcing.
- 4.2 The Board generally welcomed the paper and felt the direction of travel was grounded in the organisational strategy, the metrics should demonstrate value and impact and noted that hybrid working in other organisations was still evolutionary and the challenge was to balance the needs of individuals while also ensuring people stay connected to the organisation. They welcomed a discussion in a workshop setting to explore the questions in greater detail.
- 4.3 There was a suggestion of clarifying the ‘brand’ of what working for The National Archives means, articulating that we are part of the Civil Service and the challenges and opportunities around this and the impact of partnerships, e.g. with the Parliamentary Archives, in forming an organisational culture and identity. EJA offered to bring a paper on the Brand tagline, which was welcomed.
- 4.4 The Board:
- (i) Welcomed the paper and first discussion;
 - (ii) Agreed to hold a workshop, ideally in June/July, to explore the questions in greater detail and inform the final strategy; and
 - (ii) Welcomed EJA to bring an item on The National Archives’ new brand tagline to a future Board meeting.

Action by: AM/EJA/AB

Post meeting note: With the agreement of the Chair, the workshop has been deferred to the September strategy session, to allow for a timely workshop on the external Board effectiveness review findings in July.

5.0 2022-23 Annual Report (First Draft)

- 5.1 RP joined the meeting halfway through the item.
- 5.2 The Board was invited to comment on the first draft of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 and received an update on the project plan.
- 5.3 The Board:

- (i) Received and reviewed the first draft of the annual report;
- (ii) Noted that the Project Team will incorporate its comments into the next iteration, particularly in relation to some of the language;
- (iii) Endorsed the thematic structure and overall narrative and felt it was an accurate record of our performance during the year and brought out the breadth of the work the organisation undertakes; and
- (iv) Received assurance that the production timetable was on track.

Action by: NC/AB

6.0 Responsibility Allowance

- 6.1 Responsibility allowances (RAs) have been used at The National Archives for several years to acknowledge when people have taken on additional responsibilities within their role on a temporary basis. The Board received a paper on introducing a policy that covers the consolidation of Responsibility Allowances into an open and transparent process to ensure consistency of implementation. Subject to the Board's endorsement, the policy will be formalised with unions and adopted through the usual Policy Review Group process.
- 6.2 The Board, noting the number of staff in receipt of RAs and the process going forwards, thought the proposal was sound. They also discussed exploring band pay progression to address the longstanding challenges linked to recruitment and retention and looking at temporary promotions where staff were taking on additional responsibilities for projects that were longer than 12 months.
- 6.3 The Board:
- (i) Endorsed the Executive Team's decision of introducing a new Responsibility Allowance policy and approach for formalisation with the unions.

Action by: AM

7.0 Executive Team Updates

- 7.1 The Board received a report on Executive Team activities.
- 7.2 JJ commented upon the general complaints environment. The Board discussed possible interventions, such as quarantining systems for emails, automated messages and wellbeing support for staff.
- 7.3 An update was provided relating to Twitter. The Board also received an update on the EU Reform Bill.
- 7.4 Following discussions at the last meeting, the Board endorsed management's decision of continuing to use TikTok to reach a wider diverse audience, whilst keeping a watching brief on the environment and subject to maintaining compliance with government guidance.
- 7.5 The Board also received assurance around planned strike action by Civil Servants.
- 7.6 The Board noted the updates.

8.0 Non-executive Board Member Verbal Updates

- 8.1 Non-executive Board Members (NEBMs) each provided a verbal update on their recent activity, including insights from other organisations.
- 8.2 SC noted attending a Civil Service College training session for NEBMs and also attending the recent Corporate Induction for new staff.
- 8.3 RP noted attending a Cabinet Office seminar for new NEBMs, which focused on the duties of public office holders and the role of NEBMs to constructively challenge. He noted our previous Chair, Lesley Cowley speaking at the event.
- 8.4 AW noted a meeting with VJ and attending the Unheard Opera event. He also noted meeting the DCMS Interim Permanent Secretary and receiving an invitation to represent The National Archives at HM King Charles III's Coronation.
- 8.5 The Board noted the updates.

9.0 Interim Update on the Board Effectiveness Review – Verbal

- 9.1 AW provided a verbal update on the external Board Effectiveness Review, reporting on the headlines from Campbell Tickell's draft report, which overall showed a Board that is generally well run and effective, and which seems to have improved over the last few years. It also highlights scope for improvement around how to make better use of Board's time through content and rhythm of Board meetings and looking at ways of working together to derive greater value from the Board.
- 9.2 The Board:
- (i) Noted the verbal interim update; and
 - (ii) Looked forward to receiving the full report at its next meeting.

*Action by: AW/AB***10.0 Strategic Intents Business Priorities 2022-23 – Year-end Performance**

- 10.1 The Board received the Year-end Strategic Intents business priorities performance report 2022-23, which reported on progress by end March 2023; and noted the amber and green ratings and the reasons behind them.
- 10.2 RP commented on the impact of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project and general resourcing constraints over the period.
- 10.2 The Board:
- (i) Noted and endorsed the Year-end Performance report and congratulated the team on completing so much in the period.

11.0 2023-24 Business Priorities

11.1 The Board was presented with a working draft of the one-year business priorities for 2023-24, mapped across from the four-year outcomes articulated within the new business plan, which was currently with ministers for sign off. The paper sought a steer on a number of questions, around focus, 'SMARTness' of the delivery metrics, linkages with our inclusion work and skills and capabilities to deliver the priorities.

11.2 The Board agreed that the objectives should be as SMART as they can be, and noted that priorities were currently missing from the document. There was support for completing the workforce planning work to inform and drive the priorities and the Board suggested bringing this, along with the next iteration for approval to the next Board meeting. Whilst digital was covered, people, inclusion and commercial activities seemed to be absent and needed to be given more thought to.

11.3 The Board:

- (i) Reviewed the draft 2023-24 Business Priorities and made a number of comments;
- (ii) Delegated the development and format of the metrics to management; and
- (iii) Encouraged management to complete the work around workforce planning to inform and drive the priorities; and
- (iv) Agreed that the next iteration of the business priorities should be brought to its next Board meeting for approval.

Action by: NC

12.0 March Management Accounts

12.1 The Board received the March Financial Report (unaudited).

12.2 The Board:

- (i) Received and endorsed the March Financial Report; and
- (ii) Noted that the financial performance, through careful management, was an improvement to previous years.

13.0 Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

13.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

13.2 The Board reviewed the Actions Log.

14.0 Any Other Business

Forward Work Programme

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

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 14.04