



FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Date: Friday 20 October 2023 (Informal meeting)
Time: 13.00 - 16.00
Venue: John Rylands Research Institute
Chair: Professor Leon Litvack (LL), Deputy Chair
Minutes: Isabel Saunders (IS), Senior Governance Coordinator and Secretary to the Advisory Council
Members: Dr Helen Forde (HF)
Dr Adele Redhead (AR), Independent Member
Ms Jenny Shaw (JSh), Independent Member

Others in attendance:

The National Archives (TNA)

Mr Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (ex officio)
Ms Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Director of Research and Commercial Development
Ms Emmajane Avery (EJA) Director of Public Engagement and Sector Leadership
Ms Tina Morton (TM) Head of Archives Sector Leadership
Governance Coordinator

Advisory Council

Ms Liz Copper (LC) Advisory Council Member
Mr Stephen Hawker (SH) Advisory Council Member

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Master of the Rolls, Nigel Fletcher and Dr Jeannette Strickland submitted apologies for absence.
- 1.3 As the meeting was inquorate, the Chair ruled that an informal discussion of the agenda would take place and any decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting.
- 1.4 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 2.1 Members reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023. The item was rolled over to the next quorate meeting for formal agreement.

Action: IS to amend and upload the approved minutes.

3. Keeper and Historical Manuscripts Commissioner's (HMC) Update

3.1 JJ introduced the paper and invited questions from members.

3.2 Members discussed the relationship between The National Archives and the Archives and Records Association.

3.3 Members congratulated The National Archives on its 'Spirit of Invention' exhibition and public engagement aspirations.

3.4 Members wished to record their thanks to the former Head of Research, Pip Willcox, for her work in the role.

3.5 Members noted the update.

4. Archives Sector Update

4.1 TM introduced the paper and provided an update on The National Archives' Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship programme, which had been successfully launched, and a survey on public engagement that had been recently conducted across the archives sector.

4.2 Members noted that some archive services were experiencing financial difficulties owing to budgetary constraints.

4.3 TM advised that they were working with various councils in England and Wales to ascertain the levels of risk to archives in local authorities.

4.4 TM advised that recently-published guidance for staff in local authorities managing archives was now being circulated.

4.5 Members noted the update.

5. Update on Research and Academic Engagement

5.1 GMR introduced the paper and invited questions from members.

5.2 Members enquired about the scope of The National Archives' public engagement programme and ambitions.

5.3 JJ and EJA highlighted the breadth of public engagement currently underway and the benefits of the shift towards remote learning that occurred during the pandemic for reaching people over a wider geographical area.

5.4 Members noted the update.

6. Introduction from the new Directors for Archive Sector Leadership and Research

6.1 GMR and EJA introduced themselves as Directors at The National Archives with responsibility for the Research and Archive Sector Leadership portfolios respectively.

6.2 GMR outlined changes to the structure of the Research department at The National Archives, following the departures of the Director of Research and Collections and Head of Research.

6.3 Members welcomed GMR and EJA to their wider roles.

7. Strategic Priorities 2024

7.1 LL introduced the item and invited comments from members on the Forum's strategic priorities for 2024.

7.2 IS said that the Forum had agreed six strategic priorities for 2023 and had achieved five of these. Members noted that it had been difficult to address the sixth priority, 'Access to Archives', since the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.3 Members discussed the Forum's draft strategic priorities for 2024 and agreed the following:

7.3.1 Artificial Intelligence;

7.3.2 Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager Apprenticeship;

7.3.3 Sustainability in Independent Archives;

7.3.4 Building relationships with the Manorial and Tithe Documents Panel;

7.3.5 'Archives Unlocked', the vision for government records due to be refreshed in 2024;

7.3.6 Access to archives.

7.4 Members noted the paper. The item was rolled over to the next quorate meeting for formal agreement.

8. Terms of Reference

8.1 IS introduced the item and summarised the minor amendments to the Forum's Terms of Reference since the previous version discussed by members, which reflected recent changes to The National Archives' directorates and clarified the relationship with the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives.

8.2 Members discussed the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference.

8.3 Members also discussed the evolution of the Forum meetings in the previous couple of years, praising the greater structure in the programme and the benefits of discussions with guest external speakers.

8.4 Members discussed the process for sharing relevant information with the Advisory Council. LL suggested that information could be collated and put in a document library for Advisory Council members to view.

8.5 Members noted the paper and reviewed the amended Terms of Reference. The item was rolled over to the next quorate meeting for formal agreement.

8.6 **Action:** Once formally agreed, the Secretariat to create a document library for Advisory Council members for information regarding the Forum.

9. Principles Behind Private Archives

9.1 IS introduced the item and summarised the history of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, including the historical evolution of legislation relating to private archival collections and changes to oversight of their jurisdiction. IS then explained the current scope of the Public Records Act 1958 in relation to private collections, which included advising on sales and the prohibition of selling Manorial Documents.

9.2 Members discussed the applications of the Public Records Act 1958 to private archival collections and the scope of the Forum.

9.3 Members noted the update.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Deputy Chair enquired about the status of the Independent Forum member appointment.

10.2 IS said that the appointment was in progress.

10.3 On behalf of the members, the Deputy Chair recorded thanks to IS for her exemplary work supporting the Forum, as this was her last meeting as Secretary.

10.4 The Deputy Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their work.

10.5 There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 15:51.

Date of next meeting: 1 March 2024