

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Adult and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date of Committee **9th September 2009**

Report Title **County Record Office Transformation Update**

Summary The County Record Office embarked on its transformation programme in April 2009. This report updates members on progress made to date and issues arising.

For further information please contact: Caroline Sampson
Head of Heritage and Culture (Archives)
Tel: 01926 738950

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? No.

Background papers None.

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Not Applicable
- Other Elected Members Councillor L Caborn, Councillor T May, Councillor F McCarney, Councillor R Dodd
- Cabinet Member Councillor C Hayfield
- Chief Executive
- Legal Alison Hallworth, Adult and Community Team Leader
- Finance Chris Norton, Strategic Finance Manager
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority

- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals Louise Denton, Scrutiny Officer

FINAL DECISION YES

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 9th September 2009

County Record Office Transformation Update

Report of the Strategic Director of Adult, Health and Community Services

Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee consider and comment on the progress of the County Record Office transformation programme.

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2008, Cabinet approved a transformation programme for the County Record Office which re-aligned the public opening hours for the service in order to release staff time for the development of on-line services and information sources, notably user-friendly finding aids. The programme also sought to raise the profile of the County Record Office throughout Warwickshire, and to explore the viability of expanding the commercial market for the Reprographics service.
- 1.2 The County Record Office has experienced massive increases in on-line interest in its services and holdings in recent years, while visitor figures for the site in Priory Park have remained fairly static. Demand for information grows, as do users' expectations that information will be available to them via the Internet. By reducing on-site opening hours and re-directing the staff time saved to tasks which support the development of on-line services, the County Record Office is responding to changing usage trends.
- 1.3 In April 2009, the new opening hour's pattern was introduced. The service now closes to the public during the first full week of each calendar month.
- 1.4 This report summarises the impact to date of the transformation programme.

2. Performance overview

- 2.1 At the end of the first quarter of 2009/2010, the CRO had completed three complete closure weeks (known as collections weeks). The following table shows the impact on key performance indicators.

Measure of performance	Q1 2008/9	Q1 2009/10	Comments
Visits to searchroom	2015	1492	26% fall. So far, readers unable to visit during collections weeks do not appear to be choosing an alternative day to visit.
Documents consulted	3272	2967	10% fall. This means that the number of documents per visit has increased, so users are adapting what they do during their visits, rather than maintaining the number of visits
Web page views	377,591	873,795	131% increase. Internet use continues to rise dramatically.
Web pages views on the on-line catalogue (Warwickshire's Past Unlocked)	270,593	431,099	59% increase. Usage of the on-line catalogue continues to rise significantly
Number of individual items catalogued on the on-line catalogue	3874	6066	The on-line catalogue is becoming more representative of the collections held. 22% of our holdings are now catalogued on-line, as opposed to 20% in Q4 of last year.
Visitor satisfaction	93%	91%	Visitor satisfaction levels remain very high, despite radical change to service provision.
Number of official complaints received about the new opening hours pattern		1	The change in opening hours and the reasons behind it were very well publicised both locally and nationally, through traditional media and on-line.

- 2.2 Performance levels are good overall. The most disappointing is that the number of visits has fallen almost pro rata with the reduction in opening hours. We had expected visits to fall less, with users opting to change the date of their visit rather than visit less frequently. We will continue to monitor this indicator, and identify remedial actions if appropriate.
- 2.3 The high level of satisfaction and the very low level of formal complaints is testimony to the hard work of staff and other stakeholders in communicating the transformation message effectively.

3. Collections week achievements

- 3.1 Details of work undertaken during collections weeks are made available to searchroom visitors and also on-line via our web pages. The first three bulletins are attached to this report for information. Underpinning all of these is a need to ensure that we can promote the work achieved through the WCC web infrastructure effectively. E-commerce is a key strand within this, and we continue to champion the prioritisation of this business-critical functionality within the new WCC financial systems. Without it, we will be unable to develop the badly needed income streams that we hope will flow from availability of enhanced services and data to on-line users.
- 3.2 Many users of the County Record Office require copies of the documents which interest them. The CRO currently provides a range of copying or Reprographics services, such as photocopying, scanning, photography, etc. It has been suggested that if the service were to be put on a more commercial footing, it may be possible to increase the range of services offered and generate more income. This is clearly of interest as we explore ways of improving financial sustainability.

Work has begun on identifying a number of possible partners, and evaluating the potential market for Reprographics services.

- 3.3 We have been able to identify a cost-effective and pragmatic means of working in partnership with the Library and Information Service to increase awareness and understanding of the work Of the County Record Office within key libraries. We hope to launch “table-top record office” information packs which signpost library users to key record office services and facilities before the end of the year.

4. Feedback from users, staff and volunteers

- 4.1 The regular bulletins which give details of what has been achieved in collections weeks, and which also spotlight the work of a team member each month have been extremely well received. Staff report lots of user comment and interest, almost universally positive, about the tasks that are being undertaken.
- 4.2 Staff and volunteer feedback to the new pattern is mostly positive. All are persuaded of the need to address collection related backlogs, and are relieved to have consolidated periods of time in which to make headway with large or complex tasks. Morale during collections weeks is high, and there is a strong team ethos and sense of achievement and purpose. However, the process of adapting to a different work pattern is not simple, and we are conducting monthly review meetings to try and alleviate the difficulties of trying to concentrate non-collection based tasks that used to take place across a 4-week period into a shorter 3-week timescale.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The first three months of the transformation programme have generally been

well-received by users. Collections week tasks are well underway, and we already perceive tangible benefits from these in the searchroom.

- 5.2 If the transformation programme continues as planned, we remain confident that we can maintain the momentum and re-model the service in the light of new and anticipated customer demand. Our aim remains to provide access to basic information and data free of charge, but to develop a complementary suite of enhanced services which can be accessed on a chargeable basis, with the intention of establishing a regular and sustainable income stream.

GRAEME BETTS
Strategic Director of Adult,
Health and Community Services

Shire Hall
Warwick

August 2009