

# **Cabinet**

**30 January 2020**

## **Warwickshire County Record Office Collection Development Policy**

### **Recommendation**

That Cabinet:

- 1) endorses the direction for Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO),
- 2) approves the draft WCRO Collection Development Policy and
- 3) notes officers' plans to investigate options for future records storage.

### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's feedback and endorsement of a revised WCRO Collection Development Policy (Attached as an appendix).

### **2.0 Executive Summary**

#### **2.1 Background**

- 2.1.1 WCRO provides for the on-going information needs of Warwickshire County Council (WCC) services and the wider public. It responds to an average of 6,000 direct enquiries a year, requiring a bespoke, accurate response. From WCC services, WCRO receive average of 130 enquiries a year that are either critical or important to other areas of WCC business and can result in WCC successfully defending itself against liability actions including the following:

- Critical evidence to enable WCC's Claims team to defend liability claims e.g. Warwickshire has not had a successful historic abuse case brought against it
- Enabling Information Rights to provide due diligence and good customer service to their clients, and for the individual client sometimes providing scarce personal information which can help them understand their life experience

- 2.1.2 WCRO also provides crucial 'information interventions' for citizens of Warwickshire that shape their lives and identity. Regular examples of such interventions include:

- Adoption registers, particularly if no information available through Social Services
- Records of schools/children's homes for locating individuals in abuse claims
- NHS studying inquest records of family members to assist diagnosis and prognosis of living family members e.g. study of clinical genetics

2.1.3 WCRO also has large-scale online use of its content. Total annual page views are around 4 million. By comparison, in the year to February 2019 WCC had 5.5 million-page views on its public website.

2.1.4 The draft Policy has been reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets council objectives and priorities.

2.1.5 Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan was appointed in February 2019 as a consultant to review the current WCRO Collection Development Policy and to undertake a high-level, broad-brush review of the WCRO to inform its future strategic direction.

## 2.2 **Why we need a WCRO Collection Development Policy?**

2.2.1 The draft Policy governs what WCRO does and does not collect. Correct collecting ensures WCRO acts as the long-term memory of WCC. It also collects public records (e.g. hospitals and courts) and private organisations and individuals. The totality of its collections provides the documentary memory of the County. It enables WCC to:

- **Efficiently observe statutory requirements** to look after its own records (which it is constantly creating) under The Local Government Act 1972 (s.224) and the public records it holds providing professional storage, management, conservation and access
- **Meet legal compliance** with Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Environmental Information Regulations and copyright – all of which bring potential financial, judicial and reputational sanctions if they are not observed
- **Manage and reduce corporate risk and liability** e.g. around planning, historic abuse claims, flooding, liability

- **Contribute to well-being, education and learning agendas** through its public service
- **Positively present the county council** to its community as not just a service provider but a method to engage as a facilitator to enable individuals and communities to shape their own lives e.g. personal understanding and discovery, and long-term volunteering programme

## 2.3 Analysis of the current collections

2.3.1 The draft Collection Development Policy contains an analysis of the collections held at WCRO.

## 2.4 Challenges for WCRO

2.4.1 In her report Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan highlighted the following:

- WCRO should be recognised as a core business function by Warwickshire County Council. There are opportunities to leverage WCRO's expertise, services and collections for the Council's own work
- The understanding in the County Council of the importance of WCRO's persistent information assets and their long-term preservation as vital for council operations, risk management and corporate memory can be improved. These assets have taken literally millions of staff hours and pounds to create and are irreplaceable and vulnerable
- The digital preservation function to manage the county council's information assets now that these are primarily digital can be improved. Digital records are particularly vulnerable and need careful management from their creation to ensure long-term survival and reduce corporate risk

## 2.5 Storage Facilities

2.5.1 A major challenge faced by WCRO is that it is likely to use all of its available storage during 2021. If WCRO runs out of storage and is not able to secure permanent additional space its ability to collect records will be severely diminished and it will need to find a temporary solution (e.g. rental of space) to ensure that it is able to fulfil its purpose and retain its accredited status.

2.5.2 Any such temporary solution is less desirable than securing permanent additional space (as any records stored there are vulnerable to outside factors (e.g. termination of storage agreements)) and should only be used as a temporary solution whilst permanent additional space is secured.

## 2.6 Refocussing of WCRO

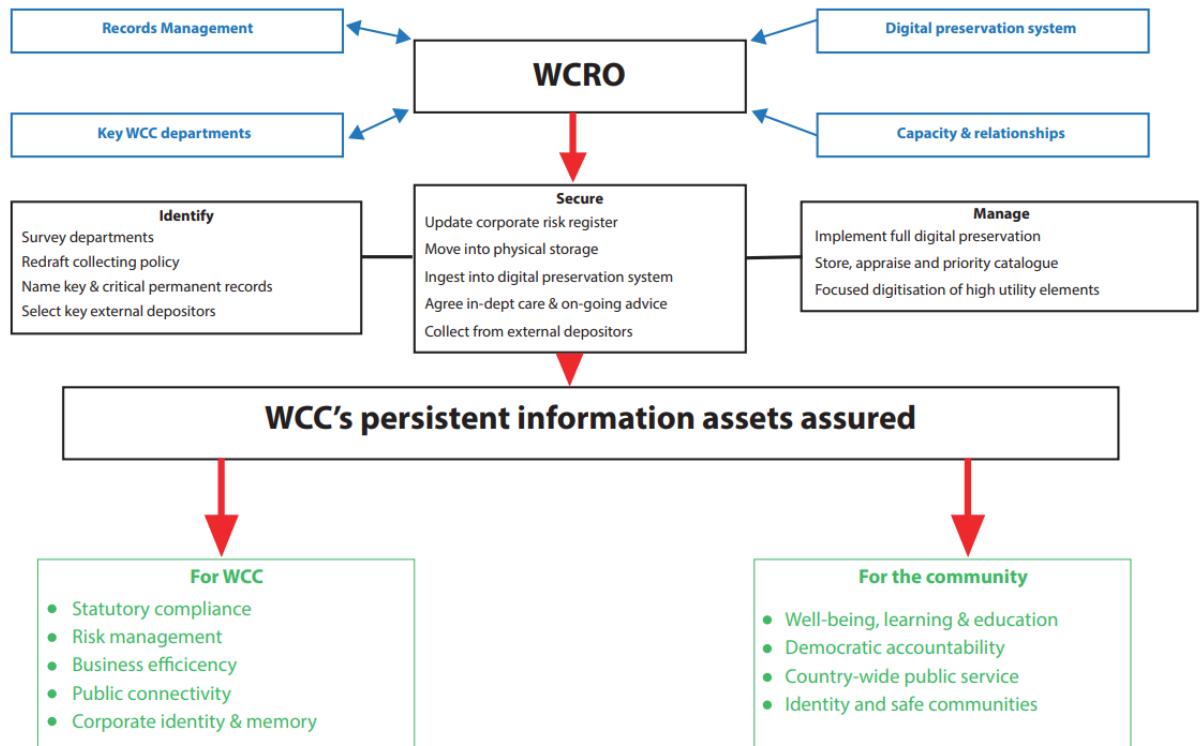
2.6.1 The draft WCRO Collection Development Policy will provide a framework to allow WCRO to refocus its collecting of records to ensure that whilst continuing to provide an accredited public service it better serves the needs of WCC:

As is	To be
WCC records are transferred to WCRO on an ad hoc basis if / when the record creators choose to do so	WCRO will work with Information Governance (IG) to ensure all records suitable for transfer to WCRO are identified in the WCC Retention Schedule and processes are embedded to ensure regular transfer of such records to WCRO
Public records are transferred to WCRO on an ad hoc basis if / when the record creators choose to do so	<p>WCRO will work the creators of public records to inform their corporate retention schedules to aid the regular transfer of such records to WCRO</p> <p>This is dependent on the securing of further storage as current storage is not sufficient to allow the large-scale transfer of public records</p>
Other records (those which are neither WCC records or public records) are mainly donated or deposited with WCRO on an ad hoc basis if / when the record creators choose to do so	<p>Research will be completed to identify record creating bodies within the five districts and boroughs of Warwickshire</p> <p>WCRO will liaise with identified creating bodies to influence the donation and deposit of records with WCRO</p>
WCRO is piloting an open-source digital preservation system (Archivematica) to preserve digital born records	WCRO will secure funding and work with IG and other WCC teams to ensure Archivematica is correctly configured to preserve WCC digital born records

2.6.2 WCRO will become a critical, integrated support function for WCC business units by assuring the Council's persistent information assets, promoting a sense of value around WCC's information assets, a valued public service and partner, and a core resource for Warwickshire's heritage infrastructure.

2.6.3 WCRO needs to have equitable balance between its services to WCC and the public. The rebalancing process, whereby a supported WCRO identifies and

secures information assets and then opens up access and use as a widely recognised WCC support function, can be summarised in the following diagram:



### 3.0 Conclusions

3.1 The draft Collection Development Policy sets out a clear vision for improving the role WCRO plays in supporting the county council to:

- Observe statutory requirements to look after its own records (including digital records)
- Meet legal compliance with information legislation and copyright
- Fulfil its ethical duty to provide democratic accountability
- Enable individuals and communities to shape their own lives
- Retain a written record of the diverse communities which make up Warwickshire.

3.2 The policy fully supports the organisation in achieving its goal of being the best it can be by collecting and making available records which will inform the council and the public allowing them to make better informed decisions.

## 4.0 Environmental Implications

- 4.1 If the recommendation to instruct officers to investigate options for future storage of records is approved a scoping exercise to identify possible solutions will need to be completed. Any long-term storage solutions identified will meet key sustainability requirements and best practice in this area.

## 5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications for the draft Policy itself, however, any long-term storage solutions identified may have a capital cost and potentially a revenue cost. This will need to be scoped and quantified so the priority for investment can be considered alongside the other options for the use of the Council's available resources.

## Appendix

Draft County Record Office Collection Development Policy

### Background papers

None

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication.

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