

AGMA STATUTORY FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE 2019/20

Date: 18 September 2019

Subject: Greater Manchester County Record Office and Greater Manchester Archives & Local Studies Partnership

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Committee is asked to consider the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to note the progress of Archives+ the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO) is operated by Manchester City Council (MCC) on behalf of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). GMCRO was opened by the former Greater Manchester Council (GMC) in 1976. Since 1986 GMCRO has since been supported by all of the AGMA districts and other joint AGMA authorities. GMCRO houses 4 miles of archives and seeks to identify, collect, preserve, and promote the widest possible public access to the documentary heritage of Greater Manchester in accordance with the statutory requirement of the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967, the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972.
- 1.2 GMCRO was previously based at Marshall Street in Manchester City Centre, but moved to Manchester Central Library in early 2014 as part of a wider archive partnership called Archives+. Archives+ had made archives more accessible by creating exciting interpretive exhibition spaces to provide new ways for more people to discover the richness and relevance of archives, share their own stories and have a personalised experience of the City Region's history. Manchester's iconic Central Library reopened after a four year in 2014, £50m transformation programme and is now one of the most popular libraries in the United Kingdom.
- 1.3 The Archives+ partners include the North West Film Archive (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Trust (The University of Manchester), the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, and the British Film Institute. Councillor Madeline Murray was until recently the AGMA representative on the Archives+ Board.
- 1.4 In 2012 a feasibility study commissioned by AGMA recommended the creation of a formal Partnership to provide an overarching strategy and development plan for the local authority archive and local studies services in Greater Manchester. There are significant potential benefits to be gained in terms of collaborating on service improvement and future sustainability.
- 1.5 At the Statutory Functions Committee in June 2012, the Committee agreed to provide governance to enable the Partnership to be set up. It also agreed to create an officer group to lead the work of the Partnership and report to the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee. GMCRO provides strategic leadership to the partnership. The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership was formed, as a result and consists of representatives of each of the 10 GM authorities.

1.6 The Archives+ Partnership and GM Archives and Local Studies Partnerships (GMALSP) are held in high regard nationally as a model of best practice. Officers from our partnerships regularly speak at national archives conferences.

2.0 GMCRO and Archives+ - five years on

2.1 Our Partnership

The Archives+ Partnership consists of the following organisations, which are located at Manchester Central Library

- + Manchester City Council – Libraries and Archives
- + Greater Manchester County Record Office
- + North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University
- + Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (The University of Manchester)
- + Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society.

The Partnership received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund from 2013 to 2017.

- + Manchester Jewish Museum have temporarily re-located to Central Library earlier this year and are therefore also temporary members of the Archives+ partnership.

2.2 Archives + for everyone

Archives+ has pushed the boundaries of what archive services can do and who they engage with. Each partner has their own knowledge and skills to make us better together.

Central Library celebrated the fifth anniversary of being reopened in March 2019, following a significant transformation.

In 2018/19, around 1.8 million people visited the library, this is by far the highest number of visitors since the library re-opened, up 17% on the previous year. Latest figures are showing that the visitor numbers have exceeded 2 million visits over the last 12 months, making it the most visited public library in the country.

As a focal point of the library, Archives+ has gone from strength to strength. Prior to the project, each Archives+ partner reached only 15,000 people annually.

The family history helpdesk run by the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society helped approximately 4,000 people in the last 12 months.

Audience development is about more than numbers through the door. Through the Activity Programme the project has reached a far wider audience than similar activity undertaken previously:

- + The age of people engaged in the Archives+ activity programme is far wider and more evenly spread.
- + Peaks in the age of engagement with archives are now at ages 6–10 years and 26–59 years, rather than over 55 years old, which is the most common age usually for visitors to archives services.
- + approximately 70% of visitors are White, compared to the previous almost 100% White audience at Greater Manchester County Record Office.
- + The numbers of families and young people engaging with archives has increased significantly.

2.2 **A sense of ownership**

Archives+ is something people want to be part of. Community groups are constantly depositing their archive collections, and holding exhibitions in Central Library. The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah’s Heritage Lottery Funded Coming in from the Cold project has increased engagement with community groups relating to ethnic minority community groups

2.3 **Feedback and quotes**

“This has become my favourite place in Manchester.” Customer

“It is not easy to explain what an archive is in outreach; the digital exhibits really help with this.” Staff member

“The Central Library is an iconic building in the heart of Manchester City Centre. It is a fascinating place to visit with a wonderful archive.

It has a great selection of interactive audio-visual displays along with books, DVD’s and other material. We especially love the picture archive and maps which show how Manchester developed and living conditions changed through the years.”

TripAdvisor review.

“We stopped in here after hearing about a tv archive that they have inside. I loved walking around the library and seeing all the different little areas they had inside. They have this brilliant feature where you can book their archive software. I had a date snuggled up in one of their pods watching old Captain Scarlet episodes. It is a

great little place to come in and shelter from the rain!” TripAdvisor review.

“At the War Museum they told me that I may find some information in this library. My Granddad had been with the Durham infantry in the WW1. The people here directed me to books which helped me understand that as he was injured he would have been brought back to England then by train to Manchester. Here people with carts or any mobile vehicle would have taken the injured to the makeshift hospitals It was likely that Granddad was cared for at the old boys school. Just like him the people of Manchester helped me also. Thank-You.” TripAdvisor review.

2.5 **Building on success – highlights of the last 12 months.**

It has been a great 12 months for Archives+.

Over 2 million people visited Central library, this is by far the highest number of visitors since the library re-opened, and makes it the most visited library in the country.

For the first few months of 2019, the Archives+ exhibition area benefited from a Frank Sidebottom takeover. The Frank Sidebottom / Chris Sievey archives have recently been deposited in Central Library. A selection of the of the archives were exhibited in an innovative and fun way. The exhibition, entitled Bobbins, proved immensely popular with people travelling from all across the country to visit. The North West Film Archives uploaded a large volume of new material from the Sievey archive into the film viewing pods. The number of views of this material was record breaking – 7000 across the two-month exhibition. The previous highest number of views on record was on the opening month of the library in 2014, when there were 2000 views.

In 2018, The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (The University of Manchester) was awarded **£357,000** from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Coming in from the Cold project from 2018 to 2021. The project is progressing well, supporting local community groups who have been awarded funding from the HLF, develop their archives. The project is exceeding its targets.

Manchester Libraries and Archives has been awarded **£485,000** from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be the North West hub of the British Library’s Unlocking the UK Sound Heritage. The project, which runs from 2019 to 2022, is now fully underway with the three staff beginning in post in February 2019. We are digitally preserving and making available thousands of at risk sound recordings, many of which are part of the North West Sound Archives held in Manchester Central Library. Collections of sound archives held across Greater Manchester and the North West are incorporated within this project. Many of these recordings are oral histories,

providing a fascinating insight into the lives of residents of Manchester and the North West, increasing awareness and pride in our communities. We will improve access by making it easier for people to find and listen to audio archives, engage the public in audio archives through events and activities and provide opportunities for residents to volunteer as part of the project. As part of this project, we will work in partnership with the MMU's Manchester Voices project which has recently been awarded £700,000 by the Arts & Humanities Research Council

Manchester Jewish Museum have received £2.9 million to transform their museum in Cheetham Hill. Since July 2019 and until 2021 the Jewish Museum is located within Central Library. The 'Wandering Museum' is housed within Central Library, in City Library, and enables visitors to see highlights of their collection. The museum is receiving higher numbers of visits than at its permanent home. The majority of visitors have little previous knowledge of the museum. Most have limited understanding of Jewish faith, history and culture - so being in the library is significantly increasing awareness of the museum. The majority of visitors are 'young adults', which is an age group that traditionally, the museum struggles to attract.

We have been working with Manchester Art Gallery and the University of Manchester on the Manchester Together Archive. This project (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund) aims to develop a digital archiving platform to support the digitisation, development and interpretation of more than 10,000 items that were left in the spontaneous memorials in St Ann's Square and elsewhere in Manchester after the Arena attack on 22nd May 2017.

Archives+ have worked in partnership with the "Burnage: A Place Called Home" project, supporting them with the development of their archives and hosting activities.

3.0 Greater Manchester and Local Studies Partnership

3.1 Action Plan

GMALSP has continued to work effectively together, for the benefit of all 10 GM authorities. The most recent copy of the GMALSP action plan 2017-20 is attached as Appendix 1. Highlights of the plan, demonstrating the effectiveness of the GMALSP partnership include:

3.2 Digital Preservation

The National Archives have identified Digital Preservation as the aspect of archives

which most Local Authorities are least well equipped to deal with.

In November 2018 we received £9k from The National Archives Sustainability Fund, to assist GM archive services with their approach to digital preservation. A consultant was appointed to deliver a project that would provide expertise for what authorities need to do now and in the future to ensure risks associated with digital preservation are minimised, and we are in a position to deal with digital preservation effectively. A report was presented which each authority can use to determine the best way forward in relation to Digital Preservation, for their authority. Five members of GMALSP are receiving e-learning on digital preservation as part of this project. We have redesigned the GMCROs full time Conservator post, to build capacity with digital preservation. The post has been split into two part-time posts - Conservator and Digital Preservation Archivist. The Digital Preservation Archivist is now in post, and is using the consultant's report to ensure GMALSP members approach digital preservation in an effective manner.

3.3 GM Lives Replacement

A procurement process for a replacement of the GMLives web portal is currently underway and will be funded by the New Burdens funding received by GMCRO in 2017. This funding is awarded for the transfer of the public records from across Greater Manchester to GMCRO on behalf of services which are not approved Places of Deposit and therefore cannot hold public records. GMLives is not fit for purpose, and will be replaced by a web portal that will be able to showcase GM Archives in a much more effective, customer focused way. The new Web Portal will be live in 2020.

3.4 Peterloo Commemorations and Artivists:GM

16th August marked 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre. Manchester Histories co-ordinated the large scale commemorations. The ten Greater Manchester Archive Services helped ensure the commemorations took place across Greater Manchester. Each authorities libraries/archives service held two well attended talks on Peterloo - by Professor Robert Poole and Dr Alison Morgan. Manchester Central Library was the hub for the commemorations with hundreds of talks and activities plus exhibitions being held throughout the library.

The Artivists:GM project was funded by GMCA: Great Place and co-ordinated by Manchester Histories. Each authority selected some material from their archives that related to Peterloo, or one of its themes 'Freedom of Speech, Protest, Democracy'. Manchester Histories commissioned an artist for each authority (each authority's

artist receiving £1k from Great Place) who created some, inspired by the archive material. The art forms are varied, including live performance, visual, interactive and digital. This project is nearly complete in most authorities with a sharing event taking place on 26th September.

3.5 Volunteers and Volunteer Awards

The level of volunteering has increased in most authorities including extensive use of young volunteers. A very successful GMALSP volunteer awards evening was held at Manchester Central Library on 5th June.

3.6 Accreditation and Re-Accreditation

The National Archives operate an accreditation process for archives services which are 'Places of Deposit'. Bolton, Bury, Stockport and Tameside successfully achieved their TNA accreditation, and were helped with the process by working in partnership as part of GMALSP. Manchester re-accredited, having originally achieved accredited status in 2015-16.

3.7 External Storage Framework

One of the highest risks for archives service is lack of available storage. In recognition of this, Manchester City Council on behalf of GMCRO led on a framework procurement for external storage. From July, the resulting framework became available for all GM authorities, avoiding the need for each authority to conduct their own procurement exercise.

4.0 Future Priorities

4.1 The following is a summary of priorities for Archives+ and the GM County Record Office over the next 12 months:

- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online, through the GMLives replacement.
- **Digital Preservation.** The digital preservation report, outlined above contains a list of options for us, moving forward. GMALSP is using this report to decide on the most appropriate set of actions to benefit each authority's archives collections, and our customers.

- **Learning.** Continue to work with schools and partners to ensure the archive collections are used as an inspiration for education, life-long learning developing new skills and creating a strong sense of place.
- **Partnership.** We will continue to build capacity by working in partnership with the Archives+ partners and the local universities
- **Unlocking the UK Sound Heritage project.** This project will continue to digitise ‘at-risk’ sound recordings across GM and the North West and begin to make some of these available to customers.
- **Coming in from the Cold Project.** The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre will continue to deliver this project and support community groups across GM who receive funding from the newly remodelled National Lottery Heritage Fund. A visioning and remodelling exercise will continue to see how the externally funded project can be mainstreamed.
- **Manchester Jewish Museum.** Joint working opportunities will continue to be explored between the Museum and the partners to us to form a sustainable partnership that will prove beneficial even when the Museum move away from the Library. The Archives+ partners, including the museum are working together on Heritage Open Days in October which are also forming part of the Cheetham Hill Festival.
- **The Archives+ exhibition area** in Central Library requires refreshing as it has been in place for over five years. We are considering options to achieve this.
- **The GMALSP action plan** will be refreshed in Spring 2020, and will be presented at a Statutory Functions Committee in 2020-21.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.