

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities****Cultural Committee: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019**

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**Subject: Digitisation of archive and local studies material****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to propose the Council enters a partnership with a commercial subscription-based archive website. In return for digitising items from the Council's archive and local studies collection at no charge, and providing free access to this content at library PCs, the third-party would charge a fee for access to the general public. The Council would also receive a percentage of this fee.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is invited to:

- a) note the contents of this report;
- b) note that this proposal presents no financial cost to the Council; and
- c) approve the proposal to proceed to procure for a licensing agreement with a commercial subscription-based digital archive website provider.

**3. Background**

- 3.1** WDC's archive collection dates from the 14th century to present day. The collection includes material in a variety of formats selected for permanent retention. The archive and local studies collections are unique to West Dunbartonshire and both are of significant historical importance.
- 3.2** WDC's archive collection is currently stored in three separate locations and this combined with staff capacity means that access to the collections is only available to a limited number of researchers at any one time. Very little of the archive collection is currently online, and so it is only available to those who are able to physically visit in person.
- 3.3** There are a number of reasons why there has been limited digitisation of the Council's historic documents to date. For example, such digitisation is a complex and time-intensive process. Staff time is needed to check the robustness of records for scanning and the copyright status of items, and specialist equipment is required to ensure that the digital images produced are of high quality and accurately replicate the document in question. Access to digitised records through a suitable platform is required, ensuring design considerations, the discoverability of records, long-term preservation of the digital files, and adequate server provision are taken into account.

- 3.4** To overcome these challenges other local authorities, including Fife Council, have entered into licensing agreements with commercial subscription-based digital archive websites such as Ancestry.com and Findmypast.co.uk. These companies agree to undertake free digitisation of such historic documents so they can increase their content and increase potential revenue income via subscriptions. The Council benefits from having its archive digitised for free and also from free access for residents researching these records in libraries. As part of the licencing agreement, royalties would also be paid to the Council when digitised records are accessed. Digitisation of these records reduces the need to manually handle the original items, which are often fragile, and so prolongs their retention. And finally, in the unlikely event of any major damage to the collection the Council is protected by having the items preserved digitally for generations to come.

## **Main Issues**

- 4.1** Council officers began a review of this area by first considering in-house digitisation of records. The Collections Trust provides industry guidance on this process that show the average minimum cost of digitisation per page of records is £0.30. Taking into consideration staff time, overheads, equipment, project management and other costs, this rises to £3.50 per page. It is estimated that the records proposed by officers for digitisation comprise approximately 81,000 pages and therefore the potential cost to the Council was estimated at £283,500, including additional dedicated staff costs. Officers did not believe this investment was affordable given the financial pressures facing the Council at this time.
- 4.2** The records which have been identified as suitable for digitisation by Arts and Heritage officers are name-rich sources of potentially significant interest for family history/genealogical research. The records include 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century school and church records; poor relief registers; valuation rolls and directories. The records have been selected to adhere to the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and the General Data Protection Regulation.
- 4.3.** There is a high demand for online family history research. The usage report for Ancestry library edition provided in WDC Libraries for January – April 2019 shows 1,800 unique searches. This reflects searches carried out on both WDC library public access PCs and staff PCs, in support of collections-based research. If collection items were digitised and made available on a globally recognised genealogical website, it is fair to assume that the number of searches would increase significantly. Enabling online access to these historic documents would benefit the communities of West Dunbartonshire, reach the wider West Dunbartonshire diaspora, and increase access to and awareness of WDC's heritage collections.
- 4.5** An alternative to an "in-house" approach would be to seek a third-party online digital archive provider. In return for licensing with a third-party the Council would be able to provide free access to these records through all WDC library public PCs without having to pay an annual library subscription fee. The

annual subscription fee for the Ancestry Library edition which is used in our libraries is currently £2,954, which would be saved. In addition to this saving, the Council would receive royalties for searches on WDC's documents providing the Council with a small revenue stream.

- 4.6** The following information is provided to illustrate the cost that residents who wished to use this service from their home or other location would face. Individual subscriptions to the two online market leaders, Ancestry and Findmypast, represent a cost of £99.99 per six months (assuming full access to all records) and £156 for a yearly subscription (again assuming full access), respectively.
- 4.7** Such providers provide a high quality of image output, and ensure a quick turnaround time for the scanning process as they are able to use their own specialised equipment.
- 4.8** This proposal supports the WDC Archive Policy (Appendix 1) Mission Statement, which states: "The Archive seeks to identify, collect and preserve those original and unique records that document the history of West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), its predecessor authorities, and the economic and social activity of its citizens and to make them available for use by employees, the local community and the wider public."

Furthermore, this proposal directly assists with the following WDC Archive Policy objectives to:

- keep the records safe;
- sort, and catalogue the records in order to maximise their value as an information and research resource using appropriate tools and adhering to recognised international standards;
- take all necessary steps to ensure the preservation and conservation of the records; and
- publicise the Archives and encourage use of the material by employees, the local community and the wider public.

## **5 Options Appraisal**

- 5.1** An internal options appraisal exercise was undertaken with participation from colleagues in the Arts and Heritage and Performance and Strategy teams to review the three options available. This was judged against the following criteria:
- Collections care
  - Financial sustainability
  - Likely demand
  - Level of risk (inverse)
  - Public Access
  - Increased visitors to West Dunbartonshire heritage collections

## 5.2 The exercise illustrated the following:

Option	Overall points score
Do nothing	41
Digitise in-house	62
Digitise via a commercial subscription-based digital archive website provider	98

The option to digitise via a commercial subscription-based digital archive website emerged as the preferred option, scoring particularly highly on collections care and public access, as well as representing the best option in terms of financial sustainability.

## 6. People Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct people implications arising from this report. Officers would support access to the heritage collections for the purpose of digitisation with no requirement for additional staffing.

## 7 Financial & Procurement Implications

- 7.1 This proposal represents no financial cost to the Council. Digitisation would be undertaken by the successful tenderer as part of a licensing agreement, with copyright retained by West Dunbartonshire Council.
- 7.2 Royalties would be negotiable at the contract stage of any agreement with a third party company. One supplier has suggested that per million records digitised royalties could be between £300 and £1,000 per calendar month. The volume of records proposed for digitisation by WDC would be in the region of 300,000 records. On this basis therefore, it could be possible to generate between £90 and £300 per month, depending on usage.
- 7.3 As part of any contract the third party company would waive their subscription fee for organisational access to their digital platform, releasing approximately £3k per annum in the Arts and Heritage budget. In addition, as per 7.2, a new revenue stream would be established via payment of royalties.
- 7.4 All procurement activity carried out by the Council in excess of £50K is subject to a contract strategy. The contract strategy for the licensing of a third party to publish selected records from the WDC heritage collections on a commercial subscription-based digital archive website will be produced by the Corporate Procurement Unit in close consultation with Arts and Heritage service officers. The contract strategy shall include but may not be limited to: contract scope, service forward plan, the market, procurement model and routes – including existing delivery vehicles, roles and responsibilities, risks, issues and opportunities and ongoing contract management. This procurement route reflects the potential value of the licencing agreement to the provider.

## **8 Risk Analysis**

**8.1** Should digitisation as described not go ahead, then access to historic documents will continue to be difficult for those out-with the local area. WDC will be unable to maximise this rich historical asset to serve the local and wider community. These records will remain an under-utilised resource in engaging new and existing audiences. They will continue to require frequent manual handling which will shorten their lifespan. And finally in the event of a fire or other unexpected event then the collection could be destroyed forever.

**8.2** Should digitisation as described go ahead, the following risks have been identified:

- The incoming digital file copies will be very large. In order to maintain the security and integrity of these copies, it is vital that WDC archives is able to support both these files formats and the storage space required to contain them in the future. This will be mitigated by the development of a WDC Arts and Heritage service Digital Preservation Strategy, designed in close consultation with WDC ICT Services.
- It will be important to ensure that WDC retains the copyright to the digitised images once they are created, and that the external supplier does not retain ownership of them. This will be mitigated by the contract negotiated between the third party licensor and the Council's Legal Service.
- The revenue from royalties may not be as high as projected. However, this is a revenue stream not previously available to the service and this risk will be mitigated by efforts to promote access to records via the online platform

## **9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

**9.1** An Equality Impact Screening did not indicate any further action required in relation to any recommendations.

## **10 Consultation**

**10.1** This proposal has been developed by the Team Lead Arts & Heritage, with specialist input from officers within the Arts and Heritage service.

**10.2** In September 2017 Libraries and Cultural Services undertook a consultation with more than 500 service users. Overwhelmingly 76% of respondents confirmed a desire to see investment in both libraries and museums, with over half of respondents rating improved accessibility as either 'very important' or 'important'. Similarly, over half of respondents identified local history archives, as either 'very important' or 'important'. This proposal fits with those wishes from residents.

## 11. Strategic Assessment

The proposals within this report support the following strategic priorities:

- Efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents: and
- Open, accountable and accessible local government.

**Malcolm Bennie**

**Service Lead – Communication, Culture, Communities & Facilities**

**Date 29 August 2019**

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**Appendix:** WDC Archive Policy 2017

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Wards Affected:** All

Appendix 1

# Archive Policy

July 2017

## **Archive Policy - Contents**

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## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** Each day the Council and its partner organisations create or receive an enormous number of records. These records are an important, unique source of evidence and information about the nature of the Council and its activities. Good record keeping substantially enhances the value of records as evidence to help meet:

- business needs
- requirements of current and future organisational accountability and transparency
- community expectations

Good record keeping is also essential if we are to preserve the Council's archival heritage as a resource for future evidence and research.

This policy sets out the strategic framework, objectives, and guidelines which will guide the management of the Council's records.

## **2. Mission Statement**

**2.1** The Archive seeks to identify, collect and preserve those original and unique records that document the history of West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), its predecessor authorities, and the economic and social activity of its citizens and to make them available for use by employees, the local community and the wider public.

## **3. Policy**

**3.1** The objectives of this Policy are to:

- identify and collect records of permanent legal, administrative, financial or historical value;
- keep the records safe;
- sort, and catalogue the records in order to maximise their value as an information and research resource using appropriate tools and adhering to recognised international standards;
- take all necessary steps to ensure the preservation and conservation of the records;
- publicise the Archive and encourage use of the material by employees, the local community and the wider public.

**3.2** This policy applies to all public records created by WDC, its predecessor authorities, and its extended arms-length organisations (ALEOs). Public records are defined by statute in Section 3 of the Public Records (Scotland) Act, 2011. In the main, public records are the official records created by or on behalf of the Council in carrying out its functions, or created by and on behalf of a contractor in carrying out the authority's functions. These guidelines will be also applied to: appraisal of private records, where these appraisal objectives may be applicable; and re-appraisal of both public and private records, when there is compelling evidence that earlier appraisal decisions require review.

## **4. Current collections**

**4.1** The collections, which date from 1373 to the present day, currently comprise the records of West Dunbartonshire Council and its predecessor bodies along with a range of private collections which reflect social and economic activity in the area over the last 400 years, including the Singer Archive, a Recognised Collection of national significance.

## **5. Management of the Archive**

**5.1** A qualified archivist will be responsible for the arrangement and preservation of the Archives according to archival principles to preserve their evidential value and allow them to be easily accessible for consultation.

**5.2** In particular, standards that will be adhered to include the *International Standard of Archival Description (General)* (ISAD (G)), *Encoded Archival Description* (EAD), *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and*

*Families* (ISAAF (CPF)), *Standard for Record Repositories* (Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1990), and *PD5454 2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*.

**5.3** Finding aids will be compiled according to the guidelines specified in WDC's *Archival Description Manual*.

**5.4** Relevant legislation and regulations will be adhered to, in particular the *Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011*, *Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015*, *Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002*, *Data Protection Act 1998*, *Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004*.

## **6. Acquisition Policy**

**6.1** While the Council creates large quantities of records required to be retained as evidence of activity, only a very small percentage of records need to be retained permanently as archives. The following 3 categories will be used to provide an overall high-level framework to analyse records in order to determine whether they fall within a permanent category or not. These categories are not mutually exclusive: some records that warrant permanent retention may fit into multiple categories, while others may relate to a single category.

### **6.1.1 Records Documenting the Rights of the Citizen**

Many council records provide evidence of the legal status, rights, and obligations of individuals, groups, organisations, the Council itself and other public bodies. In most cases, the legal rights implications of records eventually expire. In a few instances, however, the importance of records for protecting legal rights endures despite the passage of time. Records falling into this category are preserved permanently.

### **6.1.2 Records Documenting the Actions of Council Officials**

Most records document the actions of the Council. The Archivist seeks to retain that portion containing significant documents of Council activities and which are essential to understanding and evaluating Council actions. For example, the Archives retain permanently those records that document the basic organisational structure of the Council and its services and major organisational changes over time, policies and procedures that pertain to a department's core functions, and key decisions and actions.

### **6.1.3 Records Documenting the Community Experience**

Some records document the impact of Council actions on individuals, communities or the natural and man-made environment. The Council also creates and acquires much information about people, places, material objects, and environmental conditions, as well as about social conditions, political and economic activities, and events in the Council and other parts of the country. Much of this information has no archival value. However, some is essential to understanding the role of the Council, the history of this area, its people, and the environment.

**6.2** All types of media including paper, photographs, electronic records and sound records by internal transfer, gift or purchase of permanent value created by WDC and its predecessors will be collected.

**6.3** Every effort will be made to avoid conflict and duplication with the collecting policies of other archive repositories but records of local historical interest for which no other suitable home can be found, and which are in danger of neglect or destruction, will be collected.

## **7. Appraisal Objectives**

**7.1** The appraisal of Council records and the identification of archives are critical in ensuring that citizens - both now and in the future - have the capacity to explore, study, and understand the history of the local public administration over time through access to its recorded memory.

Appraisal is a process that includes a series of evaluative judgements. The principles can be applied successfully only through partnership working between the different business areas and the Archives. The approach by the archives service is primarily shaped by its role in maintaining a record of the authority, functions and activities of the Councils within West Dunbartonshire. The significance of the functions and activities, the interest and expectation of stakeholders and resource implications must all be evaluated as part of the appraisal process to identify the best possible records to retain as part of the Council Archives.

With the broad scope of functions and activities throughout the Council and its partner organisations, the responsibility for appraisal and disposal decisions will require a blend of archival expertise with the expertise existing within individual business areas. A variety of stakeholder interests need to be considered as part of the decision making process. The ability to predict, foresee and meet all the possible future interests cannot be guaranteed. The feasibility and long term costs of storage, preservation and accessibility must be considered and assessed as part of the appraisal process.

**7.2** Within the high level strategic framework of rights, actions of Council officials, and the community experience outlined above, records selected as archives should relate to one or more of the following broad objectives, and meet the appropriate level of significance described in them:

### **7.2.1 Objective 1: Machinery of Local Government**

To identify, create and capture records of the source of authority, foundation and machinery of the Council and Council institutions.

The types of records that are likely to contribute to this objective include: promotion and promulgation of legislation; formal instruments or authorities establishing functions, jurisdictions, powers, and operations of all levels of the Council and its partners; formal instruments or authorisation establishing changes to the functions or operations of, or the cessation of a Council, Council Department or major service; records delegating legal authority to perform duties and functions; and making judgements or rulings in relation to jurisdiction or powers.

### 7.2.2 Objective 2: Decision Making

To identify, create and capture records providing the Council and the public with best evidence of the deliberations, decisions and actions of Council and Council institutions relating to key functions, programmes and significant issues.

The significance of functions, programmes and actions, should be assessed according to their actual or potential influence or impact (whether positive or negative) on the Council and Scotland's affairs.

The types of records that are likely to contribute to this objective include: meeting papers, including records that reveal the background to, and reasoning behind decisions and actions, for Council and its committees (and predecessor authorities), Boards and Board Committees of the various partnership organisations and Directors, Senior Management, Service/Function Management meetings, i.e. any meetings which are responsible for key functions, programmes and significant issues; formulation and determination of significant policy and business processes, especially those that signal a new or changed policy, or substantial expenditure, and more selectively their implementation, including those that document the background to, basis for and outcomes of those decisions and activities; implementation of high level policy and strategic management decisions within the Council; monitoring analysis and review of policy affecting key Council functions; significant reforms or re-organisation of the Council's administrative structures; implementation and review of legislation.

### 7.2.3 Objective 3: Administration

To identify, create and capture records that contribute to the protection and well-being of the community (including the protection of human and cultural rights) or provide substantial evidence of the administration of the Council, its people and the environment and the impact of Council activities upon them.

These records may embrace both routine and exceptional cases, including personal case records. Such records comprise unique, irreplaceable information that is needed by the local authority now and, probably, in perpetuity for effective planning, decision making and transfer of knowledge. They relate to matters such as health and safety, social cohesion and environmental management. The capacity of records to be used for these purposes should be clearly evident.

The types of records that are likely to contribute to this objective include: records which provide evidence of the significant effects of Council programmes and actions on individuals, communities, and the natural and man-made environment, e.g. Council and local plans and core planning records; major building warrant applications, including plans; poor law records; records containing information that is considered essential for the protection and future well-being of the citizen and their environment, e.g. identifying and monitoring toxic sites; environmental observations data; Case files - case files need to be closely assessed because of their storage implications, which involves probing consideration of their future value; complete runs of case records may be preserved where it is evident that the functions and programmes to which they relate were, or are,

of great significance in the government or development of West Dunbartonshire, or to the community; whether we keep case files is likely to depend on their future research value, and therefore on the content of the record and whether it is duplicated in a more comprehensive or researchable form elsewhere. Sampling may be appropriate in some cases.

#### **7.2.4 Objective 4: Memory**

To identify, create and capture records substantially contributing to the memory, knowledge and understanding of the Council, society and communities within the local area.

The types of activities and associated records likely to meet this objective include those relating to: records that constitute a rich, concise source of genealogical information not readily available elsewhere, e.g. valuation and voters' rolls; school admission registers, burial records; records that shed light on significant events, phenomena, persons, places or themes in West Dunbartonshire history and society; the planning and management of major infrastructure or development projects and the area's economic resources; the planning, management and staging of significant cultural and other types of events and celebrations; the identification, development and management of sites of conservation, cultural or heritage significance; and the works and activities of individuals or organisations who have significantly contributed to society.

#### **7.2.5 Objective 5: Rights and Entitlement**

To identify, create and capture records of the legal status, rights and entitlements (including human and cultural) of individuals, groups, organisations and Council bodies despite the passage of time.

The types of activities and associated records likely to meet this objective include: records of the status of persons in relation to rights, entitlements and obligations that historically have had very long term administrative and/or social relevance, e.g. registration of births, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths and citizenship; land or property ownership; the administration of titles to property, including property belonging to the Common Good; burial plots; records documenting the ownership of cultural collections.

### **8. Loans Policy**

#### **8.1 Loans from the Collections**

**8.1.1** Original material will be loaned to other registered archives on the condition that the borrower takes full responsibility for the care of the item/s and covers the cost for transport, insurance and, if necessary, conservation of the item/s on loan.

**8.1.2** Original material will be loaned for display only if conditions are in accordance with PD5454 2012, otherwise the use of copies will be encouraged.

## **9. Conservation Policy**

**9.1** The primary responsibility of the Archivist is to ensure the records are safe and protected against physical deterioration and damage.

**9.2** As WDC does not employ a professional conservator nor have the required facilities on-site, the advice and help of a professional conservator will be sought if and when necessary.

## **10. Access Policy**

**10.1** The Archives will be available to staff and members of the public.

**10.2** Access to the Archives by members of the public will be by appointment only. Proof of identity is required before the Archives are consulted.

**10.3** Readers will be required to sign a registration form and complete the appropriate permission form when requesting information subject to the Data Protection Act.

**10.4** In line with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, the general records held in the Archives will be open to the public, unless a specific exemption applies. Records containing personnel data may be exempt from disclosure under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Fragile items may also be withheld.

**10.5** All users of the Archives should conform to rules drawn up by the Archive, which are designed to protect the records.

**10.6** Readers will be supervised while consulting the items.

## **11. Review**

**11.1** This policy will be reviewed every three years in order to take account of any new or changed legislation, professional standards, codes of practice or business practices.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signed)

18/07/17 \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Chris Cassells, Archivist

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)