

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND TOURISM

15 May 2020

**Report of the Executive Director – Commissioning,
Communities and Policy**

**Feedback on the public consultation on proposed changes to
the opening hours at the Derbyshire Record Office**

(STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP, CULTURE AND TOURISM)

(1) Purpose of Report

To inform the Cabinet Member of the outcome of the public consultation into reducing the opening hours at the Derbyshire Record Office (DRO) and the proposed response to the results of the consultation.

(2) Information and Analysis

At its meeting on 11 September 2019, Cabinet approved the council's Five Year Financial Plan, which included a reduction to the DRO budget of £60,000. In order to achieve the required savings, a period of public consultation about proposed changes to opening hours began on Monday 11 November and concluded on Sunday 22 December.

The consultation sought to obtain responses on reducing the opening hours by one day per week, allowing respondents to select their preferred opening pattern. A total of 300 responses were received to the consultation. The proposed reduction to opening hours elicited positive comments about the value of the DRO and the importance of access to its collections but the majority of respondents did not support the proposed changes. For example, despite an increase in provision of records online, use of original records has not decreased and many respondents felt that the DRO would become congested on the days it was open, if the opening hours were reduced.

The County Council has a duty to consult with The National Archives on any significant change to its archive service. The National Archives confirmed that reducing the opening hours as proposed would meet the legal minimum requirements for access but that any impact on the ability of the service to carry out its statutory duties in terms of managing its collections would potentially threaten its status as an Accredited Archive Service.

In parallel with the public consultation staff from the Record Office were also investigating alternative ways to address the budget reduction and mitigate against the

potential impacts. As a consequence the DRO has negotiated with Ancestry.com and depositors to add further content to the Ancestry website, e.g. non-conformist registers, school records, post 1900 electoral registers, enabling the Record Office to increase the amount of income generated to support the service. This is in line with the overall Enterprising Council approach, which seeks to fund and deliver services in new and innovative ways.

Having secured this funding it is proposed that the additional income received from Ancestry coupled with the existing income already received and held in reserve, will be utilised by the DRO to maintain its existing opening hours until the end of the 2022/23 financial year. (Subject to no further budget reductions being allocated to the DRO). It is also anticipated that further additional income may be generated over this period.

(3) Financial Considerations

The DRO will use income for the period April 2020 to March 2023 to offset the £60,000 reduction from its revenue budget and maintain its existing opening hours.

(4) Human Resources Considerations

None.

(5) Legal Considerations

Derbyshire County Council has a statutory duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to make 'proper arrangements' for its records. The County Council also has legal obligations to manage and provide access to public records as a designated Place of Deposit for public records under the Public Records Act 1958.

(6) Other considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - social value, equality and diversity, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(7) Key Decision

No

(8) Call-in. Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report?

No

(9) Background Papers

Held on file within the Commissioning, Communities and Policy Department. Officer contact details – Sarah Chubb, extension 39201.

(10) OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet member notes the results of the public consultation about the proposed change to opening hours at the DRO and approves the proposed response to the results of the consultation.

Emma Alexander
Executive Director – Commissioning, Communities and Policy