AGMA STATUTORY FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

Date: 20 July 2015

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

Report of: Kevin Bolton, Citywide Services Manager (Reform), Manchester City Council
Sheena Macfarlane, Head of Cultural Services, Oldham

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Committee is asked to:

• Note the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership in 2015-2016.
• Endorse the booklet ‘The Power of Archives’ in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee is asked to note the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership. Members are invited to attend the Volunteer Award at Manchester Central Library on 8 September 2016 6pm or arrange a visit & tour of Archives+.

2. The Committee is asked to endorse the booklet ‘The Power of Archives’.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

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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.

1.3 The Archives+ partners include the North West Film Archive (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ahmed Iqball 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 is the AGMA representative on the Archives+ Board.

1.4 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 attracting almost 1.5 million visitors annually –70% of whom visit Archives+.

1.5 In 2012 a feasibility study commissioned by AGMA recommended the creation of a formal Partnership to provide an over-arching 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.

1.6 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.

2.0 GMCRO and Archives+

2.1 Archives+ serves the residents who visit, live, work, or study in the region. Its future success depends on meeting the needs of those groups. The following sections of this report identify three types of customer who use Archives+ and the services we provide to meet their needs: Early Learners, Active Citizens, Digital Learners, Active Ageing and Tourists

Early Learners

2.2 A learning and outreach programme helps children and young people learn about and enjoy this nationally important collection. Our outreach programme has delivered over
450 events and activities to 18,220 people including 4,826 families, 4,356 young people and 2,846 school children. This has included:

- Working with the Young Disabled People Taking Action Group (part of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People) to produce an exhibition and a comic book, “The Accessibles – Our Time is Now” for UK Disability History month. In March 2016 “this project won the Community Award at the Manchester Community Histories Awards.
- Supporting the ‘Looking Back to move Forward’ project which has worked with a group of young people from Greater Manchester (Youthforia Mental Health Action Group) to look back and improve awareness of young people’s mental health using the Prestwich Asylum archives.
- Young people projects on the history of theatre in Manchester and the IRA bomb 1996.
- Volunteer programme for Young People – 13 young people have helped support events, and creating digital content for the blog and exhibition in 2015-2016.
- School visits for Holocaust Memorial Day, Refugees Week and Black History Month in partnership with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre. A school takeover of Archives+ also took place as part of Kids in Museums Day.
- Development of guides to encourage school visits and learning resources to be used in the classroom.
- A programme of family activity including holiday events, Spectacular Saturdays and Sunday Fundays.

“We loved hearing about all the little gems about Manchester’s history. You kept the tour both interesting light hearted which was pitched perfectly at our students” (Wellington School, Trafford)

“Absolutely wonderful. We love coming to these events and the adults love them too” (a child attending holiday activity)

47% of young people aged 18-24 surveyed say that they are interested or very interested in their local heritage (Historic England 2015)

Active Citizens

2.3 More people are volunteering and becoming involved in community life through Archives+ and this is also helping to widen the range of services on offer and to secure others. 96 archive volunteers (8,856 hours) have assisted with meeting & greeting, events, family history help desk, exhibition research, digitisation, and cataloguing / indexing in 2015-2016.

“I feel I have learned many things as a result of my volunteering for Archives+. In assisting with online social media I have enhanced my overall communication skills. I also developed my writing skills in learning how to create articles and blog posts about Archives+ events, digital content and collections. In writing this content I was introduced to computer software which I was unfamiliar with”

“I feel that since volunteering with Archives+, my confidence has grown greatly, particularly in my ability to communicate with other people. I have learned how to interact with members of the public and how to demonstrate activities to children.”
93% of residents say that local heritage has an impact on their quality of life (HLF – 20 years in 12 places)

2.4 Archives+ helps create a strong sense of place rooted in welcoming the complexity and multiplicity of stories that together make the history of the region and shape the way we are today. It helps a wide range of community groups explore their heritage. This has included:

- Programme of events for Explore Your Archives Month, Black History Month, LGBT History Month, Manchester Histories, Armed Forces Day and the Somme commemorations.
- Supporting a number of community led heritage and oral history projects including Manchester Refugees Support Network, Pride, Lesbian & Gay Foundation and the Re-visiting Salford project.

“Wonderful use of technology and community spirit! This is our first trip to Manchester and the library has been a lovely place to learn about your culture and people from the past.”

97% of visitors to archives have developed a greater understanding of their community, its history and people (National Survey of Visitors to Archives – 2014)

56% of adults surveyed agree that their local area’s heritage is important for their personal sense of identity (HLF – 20 years in 12 places)

2.5 The Archives+ collections have been used as creative inspiration by a number of artists. For example the LGBT voices brought together a talented sound artist and a local LGBT youth group for a series of workshops to create poetry using the sound archive collection. We have also supported Gorton Visual arts to use World War I munitions posters with both school children and older people in Gorton as inspiration for creating their own fabric banners.

Digital Learners

2.6 The DCMS Taking Part survey shows that increasingly customers in England are engaging with archives on-line. In contrast to other parts of the cultural sector a higher proportion of adults visited an archive online than in person. We have digitised over 10,000,000 of our most popular family history records. In 2015/16 over 4.5 million images & transcripts were viewed.

2.7 Archives+ has a strong social media presence and this has enabled people to discover and contribute to the collections in new ways. In 2015-2016 over 4,000,000 images were viewed on Flickr. We have 11,500 twitter followers and 95,000 people saw our facebook posts last year. We have recently started using Instagram.

“That’s my great great Uncle George Venables on the right, he was one of the mill mechanics, I have a photo of myself taken in exactly the same spot :)” (Flickr comment on a photograph of a Bolton Mill)
Active Ageing

2.8 Family history and reminiscence work can help reduce social isolation, increase confidence and provide digital skills. The Family History Help Desk (run by the Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society on a daily basis) has helped 3857 people. Approximately 85% of participants are over 55. The Society also run a programme of family history courses for beginners and the advanced at Archives+. This has been attended by over 750 people in the last year. In partnership with the Society we have also started developing reminiscences boxes to be used by care homes and communities. We have also supported the Greater Manchester Sporting Memories network.

“I have been looking at the archives of Bury where I was brought up – renewing many old memories from that time” (Visitor to Archives+)

“I have brought my grand children here to show them what life was like when I grew up in Cheetham Hill and then Hollinwood.” (Visitor to Archives+)

Tourists

2.9 24% of visitors to Manchester Central Library and Archives+ are from outside the North West or international visitors. 31% of visitors are from the City of Manchester and 33% of visitors are from elsewhere in Greater Manchester. There is also evidence that visitors to Manchester Central Library and Archives+ spend money in the local economy. 83% of all visitors will either go shopping, stay overnight, eat or drink locally, or visit another cultural venue/museum.

2.10 The Archives+ exhibition has changed visitors perception of Greater Manchester. Some visitors (17%) reported that their perception was already positive. A majority of visitors (67%) reported that their perception had been altered by something they had learnt in Archives+. People reported a variety of changes in perception including being enlightened about events in the region in the past and learning about living conditions in the past.

“Wow! A really modern library in an old building. We ambled around the various multi-media exhibitions, watched an episode of a long forgotten television programme in the BFI pods, had a coffee, used the facilities, played with the moving bookcases looking for parish registers and marvelled at the dome in the delightfully old-fashioned reading room.” (Tripadvisor review)
Future Priorities

2.11 The following is a summary of future priorities for Archives+ and the County Record Office:

- **Fundraising and Sponsorship.** A charitable development trust was established for Central Library in 2012 and to date has attracted significant contributions from a range of funding bodies. Sponsors are actively being sought and grants applied for to enable us to continue to develop an activity programme for Archive+ and allow us to take its resources and collections out to communities. We are working with various partners on potential funding bids including the British Library on their Saving Our Sounds HLF bid.

- **Income.** There has been success in creating new income streams through retail / café, licensing / reproduction, and family history research. In particularly we have seen increase in reproduction and licensing requests. However we are exploring further avenues for commercialisation and raising income for Archives+.

- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online.

- **Enablement.** Continue to recognise and utilise the benefits of volunteers, communities and the voluntary sector in bringing a wide range of skills and experience to Archives+. We will continue to try and diversify the volunteer base – in particularly with young people, developing skills and helping to create positive pathways to work. We will Continue to help activate community and voluntary heritage projects at neighbourhood level.

- **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.

3.0 North West Sound Archive

3.1 The North West Sound Archive (NWSA), previously based at Clitheroe Castle, Lancashire, records, collects and preserves sound recordings of the life, character, history and traditions of the North West England. Until April 2015 it has been funded by AGMA (through the section 48 scheme), Lancashire County Council, and Ribble Valley District Council (in kind for premises costs).

3.2 At a NWSA Extraordinary Special Meeting in November 2014 subscribers voted to dissolve the organisation. This was based on the uncertainty of sustainable funding post April 2015. It was proposed to transfer the NWSA collections for Greater Manchester to the custody of the Greater Manchester County Record Office at Manchester Central Library. The collections were moved to Manchester Central Library in early 2015. The Lancashire collections have been transferred to Lancashire Archives and the Merseyside collections (very small) to Liverpool Central Library. Councillor Michael Young is the AGMA representative on the NWSA Council.

3.3 At a meeting on 19 February 2016 the council of the NWSA Council it was agreed that on the completion of the closure of the NWSA accounts the remaining balance should be divided equally between the “Manchester Central Library Development Trust and the Friends of Lancashire Archives; the moneys so given to be ring-fenced for the preservation of the former North West Sound Archive collections now held in the Greater Manchester County Record Office and Lancashire Archives and in making these
collections accessible to the public.” It is expected that the amount for Greater Manchester will be approximately £10,000-£15,000.

4.0 Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership

4.1 This partnership provides an over-arching strategy and development plan for the area, bringing benefits in terms of collective collaboration on service improvement and future sustainability.

4.2 Since our inception in 2012 the Partnership has successfully:

- Increased digital access to our collections and catalogues through the creation of an online portal (GM Lives) and digitisation project
- Delivered staff training in social media, working with young people and leadership skills
- Involved volunteers with the creation of the GM1914 online blog which publishes weekly stories from our collections about the First World War
- Developed a number of joint policies and standards across our services.

4.3 GMALSP have identified the following priorities for archives and local studies across Greater Manchester for 2015–2017:

- **Made in Greater Manchester** We have successfully secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to raise awareness of industrial and business archives. Volunteers will play a key role, with plans for further joint recognition and training.
- **Digital Futures.** Plans for a large-scale family history digitisation project, with support from a commercial partner are well under way. This is something we could not do as individual services.
- **Storage and Digital Preservation.** Archive services in Greater Manchester face challenges with storage. Ensuring valuable digital information remains usable over time is a key issue for archives and we will work together to help solve this challenge.

4.4 We will also continue to work together to raise standards across Greater Manchester, with further shared staff and volunteer development, joint standards and advocacy.

4.5 Funding from The National Archives has enabled us to create a booklet, ‘The Power of Archives’ demonstrating how archives in Greater Manchester make a difference to the residents of Greater Manchester. A draft copy of this booklet can be found in Appendix 1.

4.6 An awards and reward event for Greater Manchester archive volunteers will be held at Manchester Central Library on 8 September 2016 6pm. It is also intended to officially launch ‘the Power of Archives’ booklet at this event. Members and Officers of this Committee are welcome to attend.

5.0 National Context – Developing a Vision

5.1 Over the coming months, The National Archives will collaborate with key stakeholders and strategic partners from the cultural, creative and digital sectors to:

- develop a strong strategic vision to support the case for archives as a vital part of the nation’s heritage;
• explore and build on the themes of digital transformation; innovation and financial resilience; people and education; and sector leadership; and
• produce a future vision on archives to secure the best possible long-term future for archive collections and services.

5.2 The future vision will contribute to the wider landscape of the cultural debate and will build on the success of ‘Archives for the 21st Century’, making archives better prepared for the challenges ahead especially in the spheres of digital transformation, innovation and financial resilience, people and education, leadership and partnership.

5.3 Over the summer 2016 The National Archives will be hosting a series of roundtable events across the country including 29 July at the University of Manchester.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership. Members are invited to attend the Volunteer Award at Manchester Central Library on 8 September 2016 6pm or arrange a visit & tour of Archives+.

6.2 The Committee is asked to endorse the booklet ‘The Power of Archives’.