



## **Summary of meeting**

### **Advisory Council on National Records and Archives**

**12 February 2009**

The following is a summary of the meeting of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Council on National Records and Archives held on 12 February 2009 at The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, TW9 4DU.

Sir Anthony Clarke, Master of the Rolls, in the Chair. Members present were Ms Else Churchill, Viscount De L'Isle, Dr Jeevan Deol, Professor Harry Dickinson, Sir David Durie, Dr Jennifer Haynes, Mr Graeme Herd, Professor Arthur Lucas, Professor Heidi Mirza, Professor Michael Moss, Lord Roper, Ms Janet Smith, Mr Ian Soutar, Ms Catherine Maxwell Stuart and Ms Stephanie Williams.

Also present were Ms Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive, The National Archives, Ms Carol Tullo, Director of Information Services and Policy, The National Archives, Mr Nick Kingsley, Head of National Advisory Services, The National Archives, Mr Stuart Abraham, Head of Transfer and Access, The National Archives, Mrs Judy Anckorn, Private Secretary to the Master of the Rolls, and Ms Lâle Ozdemir as Secretary.

#### **Access to public records**

Following its closure being queried by the Council, it was pleased that a government department had agreed to release a file on the Windsor Pop Festival.

#### **Freedom of Information cases handled by The National Archives and considered by Council panels**

In line with its statutory role under FOIA since November 2008 the Council has convened six panels, which have advised on the strengths of the public interest test considerations applied by departments when they seek to close historical information held at The National Archives. The panels advise on information, which is deemed

sensitive under the Freedom of Information Act and requires a public interest test. The Freedom of Information Advisory Panels have advised on a total of 40 cases relating to 48 records in total.

### **30 Year Rule Review report**

The Master of Rolls stated that the independent report of the Review Team had recommended a reduction to 15 years and that this raised a number of significant points for the Council to consider; in its submission to the 30 Year Rule Review the Council had expressed the view that a reduction in the transfer period to 20 years would be desirable. The Council was informed that the Lord Chancellor would be writing to the Council to ask for its views on the recommendations.

### **Advisory Council recruitment: 2009**

The Council agreed to the recommendations put forward by the Secretary that the four 2010 vacancies should be filled by one candidate with 'political experience', two candidates with experience of 'collections of private archives' and one candidate with experience of working with 'digital information'. It was agreed that with the changing information landscape it was advisable for the Council to have a digital information specialist, especially as it would be advising on more digital information in the future.

### **Government Policy on Archives: Council's response to consultation**

It was reported that The National Archives, together with the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and Museums Archives and Libraries Wales, is close to publishing a Government consultation paper. The Advisory Council members had seen, and had the opportunity to comment on, an earlier draft.

### **Business Archives Strategy: progress report**

The Council considered a progress report from the National Advisory Services of The National Archives about the development and implementation of a strategy for business archives in England and Wales whose principles could be extended to other parts of the United Kingdom. The advent of the current economic recession and consequent increase in business failures had brought the risks to the survival of business records into sharp relief. The issue in January 2009 of the draft strategy developed by The National Archives, the Business Archives Council, the Society of Archivists, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, Museums Archives and Libraries Wales and other partners was, therefore, a timely development, particularly

as the establishment of a business archives advisory post at The National Archives is included in current restructuring proposals and will assist in its implementation.

In conjunction with the strategy, two complementary initiatives are being developed. One is a Code of Practice for business archives to be made available on relevant websites which provides advice and guidance to enterprises on managing and exploiting their historical records. The other is a Business Guide to Managing Archives for which there high-profile launch during the summer organised by the National Council on Archives. The strategy and associated work were welcomed along with the arrangements for overseeing implementation of the strategy over the next five years.