



Summary of meeting

Advisory Council on National Records and Archives

18 October 2007

Note of the meeting

The following is a summary of the meeting of the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Council on National Records and Archives held on October 18th at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Whitehall.

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

Also present were Ms Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive, together with Ms Carol Tullo, Ms Meg Sweet, and Mr Nick Kingsley of The National Archives, Ms Judy Anckorn, Private Secretary to the Master of the Rolls, and Miss Lâle Ozdemir as Secretary.

Home Office

It was reported that going forward the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice would report back jointly on the progress of the moratorium as the Ministry of Justice had inherited some of the backlog of records. The Council noted that the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice were going to work together on the moratorium.

Access to public records

The query raised in the previous meeting with regard to the use of section 40 (personal information) for individuals under surveillance was answered. At the July meeting the Council had queried why section 38 (health and safety) had not been

applied instead of section 40. It was explained that the individuals in question were not likely to have been endangered therefore this rendered the application of section 40 more suitable as disclosure of the information was deemed unfair. The Council accepted the justification.

In response to the Council querying the application of section 27 (international relations), it was reported that each case was considered on its own merits. The Council accepted this.

FoI cases handled by The National Archives and considered by Council Panels

The Council asked that The National Archives should provide responsible authorities, who carried out their respective public interest tests, with an overview of the queries raised by the FoI Panels. The Council also asked if the generic trends and issues that arose out of the Panel queries might be communicated to government departments as a whole. The National Archives agreed to the suggestions and agreed to take the issues raised forward.

Chief Executive's update

- It was reported that in anticipation of the Family Records Centre moving to Kew the reading rooms were undergoing a process of refurbishment. The Council had some discussion around the Family Records Centre given concern recently expressed in the press. It was explained that the Family Records Centre was actually run in two parts, with one part run by The National Archives, and the other by the General Register Office. The National Archives part was moving in full to Kew, and there had been full user consultation on the plans for the Kew service
- The digitisation of the 1911 Census was up and running and around twenty thousand pages a day were being processed. The project is on track for releasing a slightly redacted version in early 2009
- The National Archives has won the award for digital preservation at the Conservation Awards 2007 and has been short listed for the 2007 Civil Service awards within the 'Operational Delivery' category for effective approach to digital service delivery