The National Archives

Public Minutes of The National Archives' Board Meeting held on 28 January 2020 at 10:00am in the Swan Room, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU

Present:
Claire Feehily (CF – chairing in the absence of the Chair) Non-executive Board Member
Mark Richards (MR) Non-executive Board Member
Ros Scott (RS) Non-executive Board Member
Neil Curtis (NC) Finance and Commercial Director
Paul Davies (PD) Operations Director
Lucy Fletcher (LF) Director for Government and Information Rights
Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper
Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections
Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Engagement
John Sheridan (JS) Digital Director

Also present:
Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance (Minutes)
Beth Brunton (BB) Fundraising Development Manager (Item 12)
Catherine Elliott (CE) Head of Digital Services (Items 9)
Gemma Maclagan Ram (GMR) Head of Licensing, Publishing and Digitisation (Item 9)
Head of Financial Accounting (Item 13)
Head of Collections and Audience Insight (Item 10)
Pauline Moore (PM) Head of Finance (Items 6-7)
Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office
Digital Development Manager (Item 10)
Senior Project Manager (Item 10)
Senior Developer (Item 9)

1.0	**Apologies / Declarations of Interest**
1.1	CF welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the New Year.
1.2	Apologies for absence were received from Lesley Cowley (LC). She had submitted comments on the papers which were considered at the meeting.
1.3	There were no declarations of interest.
2.0	**Minutes / Matters Arising / Action Log**
2.1	Subject to amending para 3.3 and 6.2, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2019 were approved as a correct record.
2.2	There were no matters arising.
2.3	The Board reviewed the actions log.
2.4	A paper setting out options for recruiting a fifth Non-executive Board Member, with expertise around diversity and inclusion, would be shared with the Chair shortly. CF advised that the NHS Trust where she was a Non-Executive Director (NED) introduced associate NED positions which The National Archives (TNA) could explore.

	Action by: PD
3.0	**Executive Team Update**
3.1	The Board received and noted the Executive Team update report.
3.2	Attention was drawn to the record accession figures. This had been a large scale operation and the Transfer Team were praised for their work. In response to a question on resourcing, LF said staff retention was a concern and that she was working with JS's team to build the digital skills of her team and have cross capability.
3.3	Following the announcement of the proposal to trial changes to document ordering and subsequent social media commentary, there has been active engagement with stakeholders to understand their concerns and questions fully. The User advisory group has been particularly helpful in channelling views from different users of the service. One official complaint had been received which had been responded to.
3.4	Enterprise Resourcing Planning (ERP) Business Case
3.5	The Board reviewed the business case for the procurement and implementation of an ERP system, which would integrate and replace existing Human Resources, Finance and Procurement systems into a single platform.
3.6	A discussion ensued and the following main points were noted: • To be cautious about timings and build in contingencies, given tendency of such projects to overrun; • The Crown Commercial Service had recently implemented an ERP system which was delivered on time and on a similar budget, which provided some assurance on the project's deliverability; • The paper had been shared with Robert Millburn, Independent Member of Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), who felt the case for change had been made well and had highlighted points for the Project Team to consider around Risk Assurance; • That opportunities to implement best practice changes in business processes be looked at the same time; • To consider the approach to the roll out of the ERP solution and its impact on staff; • To set evaluation criteria to measure the success of implementation; and • To maintain a detailed project risk register.
3.7	The Board:- • Supported the business case and endorsed the approach set out in the paper; and • Agreed that in order to use this year's budget provision, the final decision would be taken by the Executive Team in February and shared with members outside of the meeting for their endorsement, with an update provided at the February meeting. *Action by: NC*
4.0	**Non-Executive Board Members' Updates**
4.1	Non-executive Board Members provided a verbal update on recent activity.

4.2	RS reported that a new archives facility in Suffolk would be completed in April.
4.3	LC has been liaising with the DCMS Permanent Secretary, following the last DCMS Chairs and CEO conference session on Board diversity, in order to support her call for more diversity on DCMS Boards.
4.4	The development of the Cabinet Office diversity mentoring trial had paused during the election and as a result of a staff change, but a meeting was now planned for June.
5.0	**Corporate Reports**
5.1	December Financial
5.2	The Board noted the December financial report and received a verbal update on the early 9+3 position, which predicted an underspend on revenue and a catch up of capital spend to be in line with HMT Funding. PM advised that a detailed 9+3 forecast would be presented at next month's Board meeting.
5.3	Business Priorities 2019-20
5.4	The Board received the Quarter 3 (Q3) Business Priorities Dashboard and discussed the four priorities presenting an 'amber' year-end confidence RAG rating.
5.5	Corporate Scorecard
5.6	The Board noted the Q3 Corporate Scorecard, which incorporated Business Priority reporting, along with key metrics identified within Financial, Audience and Wellbeing and Diversity sectors.
5.7	There was ongoing work to examine BAME and disabled staff recruitment and retention rates.
5.8	The Board:- (i) Noted the December financial and early 9+3 positions; (ii) As stipulated in *Managing Public Money*, supported the Executive Team's strategic approach to financial management, focussing resource on pre-planned and approved areas of expenditure; (iii) Approved the Q3 Business Priorities Dashboard; (iv) Noted the Q3 Corporate Scorecard; (v) Supported the Executive Team's RAG rating of 'amber' for Wellbeing and Diversity to recognise the slight drop in the percentage of BAME and disabled staff; and (vi) Asked that future reports include a narrative on metrics which were of concern to the Executive Team, the reasons for the shifts and remedial actions being taken. *Action by: NC/PD*
6.0	**Consolidated Budgeting Guidance**

6.1	The Board received and noted an update on draft revisions to HMT's Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.
7.0	**Update on 'Project Alpha'**
7.1	The Board received a paper and presentation on (i) how TNA best takes advantage of the opportunities afforded by the web to realise its vision *Archives for Everyone;* (ii) an update on the main findings from the Explore Phase of Project Alpha; and (iii) the proposed three goals for improving the catalogue on the website and informing the Project Alpha Build Phase.
7.2	The Board was invited to comment on the ideas presented to them and to provide feedback on their experiences of using the catalogue. A discussion ensued and the following main points were noted: • There was scope to grow commercial income and transform the user experience, beyond Project • To use TNA influence and contacts to ask Government organisations to signpost audiences to where documents can be found • Separate work was being undertaken, outside of Project Alpha, to improve the content descriptions in the catalogue.
7.3	Stakeholder engagement would continue running until the end of March, and, following the Spending Review, be turned into formative ideas to inform business priorities and the work of the other directorates.
7.4	The Board:- (i) Welcomed the update on Project Alpha and suggested clarifying the goals and methodology; (ii) Agreed to submit user feedback outside of the meeting; (iii) Welcomed a future development session on TNA's ambitions beyond Project Alpha and its position in the market on the nation's history and whether it was realistic and pitched correctly; and (iv) Looked forward to a demonstration of Project Alpha Build Phase at its April meeting. *Action by: JS/AB*
8.0	**Update on Digital Capacity Building Strategy for the Archives Sector**
8.1	The Board received an update on the launch and initial activities under the *Plugged in, Powered Up* new digital capacity building strategy for the archives sector. It also noted the 2019 Digital Capacity Survey results, which sought to gain an insight into the current state of digital preparedness.
8.2	The Board:- (i) Commended the strategy and action plan; (ii) Was concerned that the Sector was depositing such low volumes of digital public records and suggested holding conversations to unlock this; and

	(iii) Noted that the interventions were targeted for different sections of the Sector and each strand would be evaluated, which would be reported to the Board and also inform future activities. *Action by: VJ*
9.0	**Realising the Inclusive Archive**
9.1	The Board received a paper which set out a proposed framework to organise and prioritise the different areas of activity contributing to the realisation of 'the Inclusive Archive' as described in *Archives for Everyone*.
9.2	The Board:- (i) Welcomed the paper, which sought to move TNA in the right direction of becoming an inclusive archive; (ii) Suggested including case studies and profiling to illustrate where we currently stood and what we were trying to achieve; (iii) Supported the production of a public statement outlining TNA's aims and priorities in making an inclusive archive a reality; (iv) Noted that 2020 is the Civil Service year of inclusion, which was particularly timely for TNA to lead and develop a statement around what it means to be a civil servant archivist and act with impartiality in relation to historic records; (v) Agreed that the statement should be produced through consultation with key stakeholders and in collaboration and partnership with external experts specialising in inclusiveness; (vi) Noted that existing conversations with recruitment agencies on diversity and inclusiveness could feed into the process; (vii) Subject to adding more content and velocity to 'who we are,' felt the four pathways were broadly appropriate and that the indicative list of priorities captured the ambitions behind the *Inclusive Archive*; (viii) Agreed to the production of a more detailed and internally-focussed strategy/action plan; and (ix) Noted that further drafts of the statement and strategy/action plan would be presented at the Board's March meeting for discussion and, potentially, agreement. *Action by: SW/AB*
10.0	**Update on the Trust**
10.1	The Board was pleased to note the progress on establishing The National Archives Trust, plans for the launch event on 11 February, and an update on the funding bid to create a Clore Learning Centre at Kew.
10.2	The Board:- (i) Congratulated the whole team, especially LF and MR, for their success in overcoming the various stumbling blocks and getting to this position; and (ii) Requested that a briefing note be sent ahead of the launch event, advising

	members of the guest list and setting out roles and responsibilities on the day. *Action by: BB*
11.0	**Production of the Annual Report and Accounts**
11.1	The Board was presented with the production timetable for the 2019/20 Annual Report and Accounts.
11.2	The Board:- (i) Noted the production timetable; (ii) Asked that the round table review meeting dates be confirmed; and (iii) Noted that the project manager, with assistance from the Marketing and Web Teams, would also be co-ordinating the production of the web version of the report. *Action by: AB*
12.0	**Any Other Business**
12.1	The Board received a verbal update on the outlook for the Spending Review and on work to Legislation.gov.uk in relation to EU Exit retained legislation.
12.2	Forward Agenda and Meetings
12.3	The Board: (i) Noted the Forward Agenda for meetings and asked that strategy and broad horizons days be included; and (ii) Agreed to cancel the 24 November 2020 meeting. *Action by: AB/SW* **There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 12.50pm**