

**Association of London Chief Librarians  
and  
The National Archives**

# **Strategic Opportunities for London Local Authority Archives and Local Studies**

Working together to ensure high quality, relevant and  
economically sustainable archive and local studies services for  
London in the 21st century

**FINAL REPORT**  
Presented to ALCL 31 January 2014

**Tom Forrest and Kevin Bolton**

## The potential power of archives

If the true potential of publicly funded archive services were realised, we would live in a world where:

**Every citizen** feels a connection to their nation state and their local community and can readily find out why their country and their neighbourhood is the way it is.

**Communities are empowered** to collect and share their stories to inspire, inform and entertain.

**Every child** experiences history brought to life through innovative access to our written, recorded and visual heritage, enriching their learning and inspiring creativity.

**Young people** are inspired to take an interest in politics and their local community through the creative use of archive material to promote active citizenship.

**People of all ages and abilities** can explore their personal identity by finding out about aspects of the past, such as their family history, and can do so easily through access to the internet at home or even on the move. Engaging in cross-generational learning is an enriching experience that archives are uniquely placed to support.

**The community is offered a range of volunteering opportunities**, enriching lives and benefiting archives alike.

**Public sector organisations and businesses** make better decisions because they have access to all the relevant evidence and are fully informed about lessons from the past. The **economic potential of historic information** to the business community is unlocked and fully exploited.

**The value of the nation's archive heritage is unlocked**, supporting the UK's internationally significant research and its intellectual and economic benefits.

from

*Archives for the 21st Century, Command Paper 7744, November 2009*

## Cultural Metropolis

London is one of the most significant centres of cultural, artistic and intellectual life, with unrivalled collections of art, historic artefacts and architecture stretching across centuries and continents.

### Maintaining London's position as a world city of culture

London is an acknowledged centre for arts and culture and commercial creative industries, all of which make a vital contribution to London's economy.

### Widening the reach to excellence

London is renowned for its national and international cultural riches, but it is equally important that the city's inhabitants have access to high quality cultural services. Cultural provision varies markedly across the capital.

### Education, skills and careers

Culture can play a major role in making the lives of young Londoners fulfilling and enjoyable. There is a huge amount of excellent and diverse work being done across the city by a range of organisations. However, either because of geography or socio-economic background, there remain a significant section of young people who do not access these cultural opportunities. What is needed is a strategic approach that helps coordinate existing activities, build links between cultural institutions, schools and local authorities and raises awareness of the high quality provision on offer.

### Infrastructure, environment and the public realm

There is a strong connection between London's physical environment and its cultural offer. It is crucial that the planning and development processes in the city continue to encourage culture to flourish in the capital's venues and public spaces. In addition, much can be done to enhance the public engagement with and understanding of London's history.

from

*Cultural Metropolis: The Mayor's Cultural Strategy – 2012 and Beyond*

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## Executive summary

- I. **This draft report is for The Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) and The National Archives (TNA) and the members of the Project Board. It outlines the issues that have emerged in the process of the project and possible strategic opportunities for archive services in London.**
- II. **It is not for wider circulation at this stage. Before that can happen, ALCL needs to take a view on the conclusions and agree how it wishes to progress any or all of the recommendations.**
- III. The project aimed to consult with heads of service, archive managers and staff and other key stakeholders in order to:
  - Identify strategic development opportunities for London Local Authority Archives with a focus on:
    - Improved efficiency
    - Maximising existing assets (including collections, staff expertise, partnerships (e.g. digital preservation, conservation studio))
    - Maintenance of local identities alongside economies of scale
    - Raising of service standards
    - Partnerships and joint working
    - Potential for income generation, fundraising or inward investment
  - Generate a positive vision for the development of London borough archives, shared by heads of service, elected members, archive staff and other key stakeholders
  - Identify clear action plans for the short, medium and longer term
- IV. High quality, relevant and economically sustainable archive provision in the 21st century is the ultimate aim.

### Context

- V. This project was carried out at a time of great challenge and financial pressures in public services. Although archive services represent a very small part of any authority's total budget it was recognised that this did not exempt them from the need to deliver greater efficiency. It was also clear that any proposals for the future would need to be realistic - flexible enough to adapt in a changing landscape where funding streams are likely to be increasingly mixed and complex.
- VI. It is important to look for efficiencies that will deliver cashable savings with least damage to the services that users value and that staff have worked hard over decades to develop. In simple terms there are two ways to do this – reduce gross costs (mainly staff) or increase income - in order to reduce net expenditure.

- VII. The main proposition that emerges from this project suggests that a mix of both cost reduction and increased income is necessary. It also indicates that a single service doing this on their own is likely to have more adverse consequences than if services work together.
- VIII. There are risks associated with all the options explored, but perhaps the greatest risk is to be reactive – to maintain the status quo until circumstances dictate change.
- IX. There are opportunities for new ways of working but these require change at both the individual service level and at the collective level of collaboration and partnership.
- X. Service redesign is needed to release scarce resources to invest in areas that have the potential to reach and engage meaningfully with many more people. Although individual services could make some of these changes on their own, there are clear advantages of doing this in collaboration with other services.
- XI. The degree of change needed will require strong leadership. ALCL will be critical to progressing any of the recommendations that are adopted.
- XII. The proposals outlined in the report could be progressed as follows:
  - ALCL Executive considers the conclusions and recommendations of the Draft Report, 10 December 2013
  - Full meeting of ALCL on 31 January 2014 considers the proposals
  - All boroughs are asked to endorse the principles of the partnership and indicate if they are willing to be founding members
  - An inaugural meeting of the Partnership – in part, facilitated discussion – takes place in February/March 2014 to agree the purpose and priorities for the Partnership and an action plan to take the Partnership forward.

### Conclusions

- XIII. The archives and local studies services are providing invaluable access to the documented past of London.
- XIV. Across London's Boroughs, there are excellent examples of how archives and local studies are actively engaged with communities and contribute to their councils' priorities.
- XV. Interest in family and local history continues to grow and there is a large potential audience for archives and local studies. That audience is either unaware of the services or is unable to access them.
- XVI. In considering what efficiency savings might be possible it was identified that:
  - a. The current level of funding for archive and local studies services is a very small part of a council's budget

- b. Most councils have already delivered efficiencies by combining archives with other cultural and/or leisure services to streamline management and administration.
  - c. The arrangements in Bexley and Bromley and Triborough show that a shared services model can deliver significant savings and at the same time provide a sound platform on which to develop services in the future. In such cases the archives and local services are a part of a larger arrangement that includes library services. Other Boroughs should consider shared service arrangements like these.
  - d. A single pan-London archives service is a complex proposition. So complex in fact, that it would take a long time to design in organisational terms and is likely to require significant capital and transition costs.
  - e. A new, formal Partnership between Boroughs would enable services to deliver much more than they can at present and enable councils to optimise the return on their investment
  - f. Service redesign, with a focus on shifting scarce staff resources from the 'on-demand' physical visits to an investment in digital access and new ways to engage with audiences, could manage demand better and deploy resources in the growth areas rather than the parts that are in decline.
- XVII. Greater collaboration, through a new and formal Partnership, would enable services to deliver much more than they can at present and enable councils to optimise the return on their investment.

### Recommendations

- XVIII. ALCL and TNA are recommended to:
1. **Recognise and promote the valuable contribution that archive and local studies services in London are already making to council priorities, especially in the areas of personal and community identity, learning, skills and civil society**
  2. **Recognise the already low levels of funding for the services and the continuing financial pressures. Encourage authorities to consider service redesign with a view to:**
    - a) **Maximising assets, especially staff and volunteers, to ensure that councils achieve the best return on investment and deliver continuous service improvement**
    - b) **Meeting the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology to improve access for and engagement with the public**
    - c) **Developing their work in community engagement, making it possible for even more people to enjoy their past and be actively involved in capturing the present for the future**

3. Note the efficiency savings that have been achieved through shared service arrangements in Bexley and Bromley and the Triborough and to encourage other Boroughs to consider whether this approach could be appropriate
4. Agree that a new London Archives Partnership has the potential to support and develop services for the future by:
  - a) Working collaboratively on service redesign in order to better align resources to demand and release scarce resources to invest in new ways of working
  - b) Strengthening, through collective advantage, the ability to attract income and external funding to provide longer-term sustainability for the services
  - c) Creating a collective identity that will help raise the profile of archives and their work
5. Agree a process and timeline to enable services to consider the advantages of the Partnership and decide whether they wish to join it. Key steps in that process will include:
  - a) Draft Statement of Purpose and Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership
  - b) Draft Strategy for the Partnership that aligns with councils' and Greater London Authority priorities
  - c) Outline Development Plan to ensure the services maximise their assets and continue their role in community engagement and active learning
  - d) Project Plan to create a virtual platform for the Partnership to provide integrated online access to the collections and services
  - e) A Resource Plan to include an agreed commitment of staff time and resources to support the work of the Partnership and maximise the return on investment for all services
6. Ask the City of London Corporation to provide governance and leadership support to enable the Partnership to be set up and to review the governance when the longer term vision and development plans are clear
7. Continue to keep organisations from the wider archives sector informed of developments and explore opportunities for further collaboration



# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of the report and its audience

- 1.1 **This draft report is for The Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) and The National Archives (TNA) and the members of the Project Board. It outlines the issues that have emerged in the process of the project and possible strategic opportunities for archive services in London.**
- 1.2 **It is not for wider circulation at this stage. Before that can happen, ALCL needs to take a view on the conclusions and agree how it wishes to progress any or all of the recommendations.**

## Aims of the project

- 1.3 ALCL and TNA agreed to commission a piece of work to explore how the 33 local authority archives and local studies services in London can work more effectively together to improve services while achieving savings targets in the current challenging financial environment.
- 1.4 The objective was to consult with heads of service, archive managers and staff and other key stakeholders in order to:
  - Identify strategic development opportunities for London Local Authority Archives with a focus on:
    - Improved efficiency
    - Maximising existing assets (including collections, staff expertise, partnerships (e.g. digital preservation, conservation studio)
    - Maintenance of local identities alongside economies of scale
    - Raising of service standards
    - Partnerships and joint working
    - Potential for income generation, fundraising or inward investment
  - Generate a positive vision for the development of London borough archives, shared by heads of service, elected members, archive staff and other key stakeholders
  - Identify clear action plans for the short, medium and longer term
- 1.5 High quality, relevant and economically sustainable archive provision in the 21st century is the ultimate aim.
- 1.6 The project was managed by ALCL, and funded with a grant from The National Archives (TNA).

- 1.7 A Project Board procured the consultants, took a strategic overview of the work, reviewed and signed off at agreed milestones and project completion, and agreed a plan to take forward the recommendations beyond the end of this project. Membership consisted of the key stakeholders:
- ALCL
  - TNA
  - Archives for London
  - London Councils
- 1.8 Following a request to quote process, consultants Tom Forrest and Kevin Bolton were commissioned to lead the project.

### Project methodology

- 1.9 The consultants used a participative and iterative process to identify the current strengths and challenges of the services and explore the options for the future. A facilitated workshop approach enabled professional staff as stakeholders to engage in the thinking and generating ideas for new ways of doing things.
- 1.10 This process was intended not only to deliver the project aims but also to build a spirit of mutual responsibility and consensus that would create a sound basis for working together in the future.
- 1.11 The project looked at the available data on archive services, including those collected by CIPFA, The National Archives and the Archives and Records Association. Although the data were not comprehensive or totally reliable (see also Section 5), they provided a useful starting point for the exploration of some of the key aspects of the service, posing questions that were pursued in the project and are covered in this report.
- 1.12 The local authority archive services are part of an extensive and varied network of archives in the London Region. In addition to the local authority services, other key institutions and organisations providing archive services were informed and consulted as part of the project.

## 2. Context

### Financial pressures and constraints

- 2.1 This project was carried out at a time of great challenge and financial pressures in public services. Although archive services represent a very small part of any authority's total budget it was recognised that this did not exempt them from the need to deliver greater efficiency. It was also clear that any proposals for the future would need to be realistic - flexible enough to adapt in a changing landscape where funding streams are likely to be increasingly mixed and complex.
- 2.2 Cultural services can play a strong role in the local economy and regeneration, promoting a sense of place and identity, supporting visitor and tourist spend, and as assets when attracting inward investment. By starting a process to demonstrate the benefits of working across London, archive services can position themselves in this context and, collectively, have a stronger voice in advocating the importance of cultural services in the Capital's future plans.
- 2.3 It is important to look for efficiencies that will deliver cashable savings with least damage to the services that users value and that staff have worked hard over decades to develop. In simple terms there are two ways to do this – reduce gross costs (mainly staff) or increase income - in order to reduce net expenditure.
- 2.4 The main proposition that emerges from this project suggests that a mix of both cost reduction and increased income is necessary. It also indicates that a single service doing this on their own is likely to have more adverse consequences than if services work together.

### The purpose and role of archives and local studies today

- 2.5 Archives and local studies services aim to ensure that:
  - historically significant records and published local history material are systematically collected and described
  - the collections are preserved for future generations
  - the collections are available and accessible
- 2.6 Archives also contribute to open government and the democratic process. They provide records of the historical and contemporary context to support informed decision-making.
- 2.7 Today, the vital collection and preservation purposes of archive services are increasingly complemented by an active role in engaging individuals, groups and communities in using the archives to understand and interpret their history. In this way, archives help to foster and promote a sense of community and identity. This is explored in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

## The National Archives

2.8 In October 2011, The National Archives took on additional leadership responsibilities for archives in England. They deliver:

- a single leadership role for the archives sector in England
- Archives for the 21st Century
- strategic sector engagement, helping archives services and their parent bodies to respond to government policy, and to develop in ways that strengthen the national network of provision
- a policy information and advice role for government

2.12 Together with partners they aim to:

- encourage new thinking and initiatives in the sector
- develop and implement an accreditation scheme for archives
- inform government policy
- ensure archives are embedded in Arts Council England's wider cultural offering

## Archives for the 21st Century

2.13 Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the government policy on archives that was published in November 2009, The five recommendations of *Archives for the 21st Century* encapsulate the direction of travel for all archive services and all are relevant to the services in London:

- Develop bigger and better services in partnership – working towards increased sustainability within the sector
- Strengthen the leadership and form a responsive, skilled workforce
- Co-ordinate the response to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future
- Create comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues, and to digitised archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them
- Encourage active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and place within the community

2.14 In Summer 2012 a refreshed action plan was published by the National Archives to reflect the evolving policy environment. *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in action: refreshed 2012-2015* builds on *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. For publicly funded

archive services many are experiencing new governance structures and fewer resources. For all archives, development in technologies and user expectations mean that delivering the same services in the same ways as in the past is not an option.

- 2.15 A positive response to these changes can be seen in the resourceful approaches of many archives, leading to a number of innovative and radical initiatives. *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Action: Refreshed* is a showcase for this radical new work and a call for action for archives to develop these opportunities and to put archives at the heart of the individual, community and nation as a vital asset and invaluable resource.

### Archives Accreditation

- 2.16 Archive Service Accreditation is the new UK wide standard scheme for archive services. The standard defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging and supporting development. The scheme offers a badge of external recognition and endorsement of their service. Archive Service Accreditation is central to the Archives for the 21st Century priority to develop more effective services and increase sustainability within the sector.

### The Library of the Future

- 2.17 Arts Council England undertook a major research project called *Envisioning the library of the future* in 2012-2013 to understand better what public libraries could and should look like. Based on the discussions with members of the public and the sector it has identified four priorities to sustain and develop a 21<sup>st</sup> century public library service:

1. **Place the library as the hub of a community.** Libraries will continue to be valued as trusted safe, democratic places that offer valuable resources and expertise.
2. **Make the most of digital technology and creative media.** Libraries should be at the heart of digital innovation.
3. **Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable.** Communities are becoming more involved in the design and delivery of library services.
4. **Deliver the right skills for those who work in libraries.** Ensuring libraries have effective leadership and delivery skills for a rapidly evolving service.

- 2.18 These priorities complement the recommendations of *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* – particularly around digital information, active participation, staff development and sustainability.

## 3. London local authority archives and local studies

### Richness and complexity

- 3.1 As the nation's capital, it is not surprising that there is a complex tapestry of archives and archive services in London. It is also understandable that each authority, institution or organisation with an archive is proud and fiercely protective of it as a record of and tangible link to its past.
- 3.2 The 33 London boroughs all maintain an archive or local studies service. Many of these archive services are part of larger library/heritage/cultural services.
- 3.3 Some of these library/heritage/cultural services are operated by Trusts (e.g. Redbridge) or outsourced to companies (e.g. Wandsworth and Hounslow). There are also two examples in London of shared service library & archive provision between Councils – Bexley & Bromley and Tri-Borough (Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, and Hammersmith & Fulham).
- 3.4 They store, preserve and provide access to unique collections of high historic and cultural significance to their surrounding area and local communities and help to create a sense of place and identity for residents and visitors.
- 3.5 Their collections are rich and include historic photographs, maps, local government records, business records, community records, records of societies, and local history books relating to the boroughs.
- 3.6 The archive services contribute to local agendas for learning, attainment, health and wellbeing (see section 4).
- 3.7 Partners across London are already working together to explore opportunities for new service delivery arrangements for library and museum services, maximising available resources and expertise. There are opportunities for continuous improvement, improved learning and skills, supporting sustainable communities and economies and promoting effective leadership and strong advocacy.

### London Metropolitan Archives

- 3.8 London Metropolitan Archives, managed and funded by the City of London Corporation, holds over 100 km of historical research collections (including archives, maps, plans and photographs) that document the capital's history from 1067 to the present day. They cover formats from parchment to born digital data sets. Located in Clerkenwell it is the largest local authority archive service in the UK, attracting per year over 45,000 researchers either on site or remotely and over 25 million uses of its on line resources. It employs around 80 staff.

- 3.9 As well as holding the archives of the City and of metropolitan public and local authorities, the collections include those of businesses, charities, courts, hospitals, churches and communities, notably the Jewish and African Caribbean communities.
- 3.10 In recent years London Metropolitan Archives has played an informal leadership role particularly for local authority archives in London, notably in the Access to Archives projects and London's Screen Archives.
- 3.14 London Metropolitan Archives has substantial expertise and experience in various areas. In particular it has specialisms in:
- Digitisation
  - Learning and Community Engagement
  - Conservation and Preservation
  - Internships, volunteering and Staff Development
  - Repository management including storage and energy efficiency
  - Cataloguing

### Wider archives and family history sector in London

- 3.15 For a city as diverse and rich in history as London it is not surprising that London has a rich tapestry of archive services outside the local authority sector. The National Archives' ARCHON directory lists 653 repositories. These include university / further education archives, business archives, national institutions, charity archives, media archives, and society archives.
- 3.16 London also has a wide range of family history societies run by volunteers. These include the East of London Family History Society, London Westminster & Middlesex Family History Society, and the West Middlesex Family History Society. These are brought together through the Federation of Family History Societies.
- 3.17 Archives for London (AFL) brings together everyone interested in archives in or about London – users, practitioners and enthusiasts. Through the passion, experience and expertise of its members and guests it helps people get more out of the documents, photographs and films that make up our Capital city's rich archival heritage. It supports cross-domain and cross-sectorial initiatives and leads programmes specifically designed to improve access and engagement, knowledge and understanding of London's unique documentary heritage.

## 4. Meeting council priorities

- 4.1 Archive and local studies services in London are making strong contributions to council priorities. As a relatively small service, archives can often be on the margins of the strategic and service planning processes. When properly recognised, they can play a leading role in delivering key policy goals, especially in the areas of education and learning, empowering and engaging communities, health and well-being, supporting regeneration and growth, and facilitating volunteering opportunities.

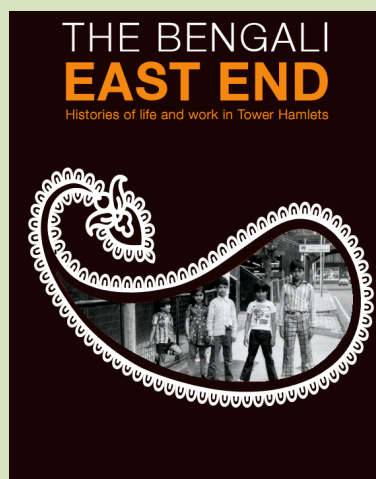
### Personal and community identity

- 4.2 Perhaps the most fundamental role of archives is that of connecting where we come from to where we are today.

#### The Bengali East End

**A twelve-month traineeship was established to enable Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives to develop new collections and engage with local community audiences that are currently underrepresented in the archive. To facilitate this, a partnership with local Bengali cultural heritage organisation Swadhinata Trust was set up. Their involvement ensured ownership of the project by stakeholders from within the Bengali community. The Trust helped to mentor and support the trainee, brokering meetings and promoting the project within their networks.**

**During 2011-2012 archive staff provided training in work-based heritage skills including cataloguing, digitisation, oral history, preservation, and responding to public enquiries. This enabled the trainee to acquire new collections and conduct oral history interviews with Bengali community members on behalf of the service. Towards the end of the project, the trainee curated a programme of events across a number of library sites and a final exhibition and booklet that showcased highlights from the newly acquired archival and oral history collections. A similar project was undertaken with the Somali community in 2012-2013.**





## Community engagement and cohesion

- 4.3 Archive services increasingly engage with the diverse communities of London, encouraging them to be actively involved in creating their own archives that become part of the wider story of the city.

### **The People's Record – Olympic Memories**

The project worked with young people from the Albanian and Bengali communities in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham to record their views and aspirations, and the impact of the games and the Olympic Park site on the boroughs. Many of the young people and their parents are connected to the Olympic site, either through living next to it or working as builders on the site, but they feel alienated from it. Through this project the young people were trained in video skills, editing and oral history to create a short video about changes in the area. They made recordings of different memories and created a video *vox pop* diary of the changes. They also worked in the local archives in all three boroughs, learning how to use the archives and to explore the history of their area. Finally, the young people and elders worked with an artist to develop a picture diary of the project as well as video diaries.

## Learning

- 4.4 Archives allow school children to bring history to life, enriching their learning experience and inspiring creativity.

### **Hackney remembers**

Children from two Hackney schools are working with community volunteers to uncover the story of how the First World War changed the lives of local people. The project is being run by award-winning theatre company Fifth Word in partnership with Hackney Archives and Museum.

Pupils for one school will look at letters, soldiers' diaries, memoirs, and official documents from the archives to discover what life was like on the frontline. Pupils from the second school will use the archive collections to tell the story of life on the home front and be able to compare life in Hackney now with a hundred years ago. The project will be delivered by the Hackney Heritage Community Engagement Team, which serves both the Archives and the Museum.

The project will culminate in a mobile exhibition for the whole community plus a digital resource pack for teachers at local schools to help them plan projects in time for the centenary of WWI in 2014. A documentary film will also be made about the project.

Community volunteers will be trained in a range of skills to research the information needed and the children taking part will act as young curators taking on the task of creating an exhibition.

## Volunteering

- 4.5 All boroughs offer a wide range of opportunities for volunteers. Volunteers are adding tremendous value, especially in the area of cataloguing and indexing materials to enable more people to have better online access to the archives

**The Local Studies library in the LB Richmond inherited a collection of 22,400 packs of building plans from the former Boroughs of Barnes, Richmond and Twickenham. Following a successful HLF bid, an effective recruitment drive resulted in a team of 50 volunteers with another 30 on the waiting list. Two months were dedicated to working with some of the existing volunteers to devise a system of data entry and selecting plans for scanning. This stage of the process was critical to ensure the smooth running of the process once the team was in place. There followed a series of one hour training sessions for the volunteers who then began the process of accessioning the plans and preparing them for scanning. The age of the group ranged from 14 to 80+.**

**The group are very enthusiastic and often come up with suggestions as to how the system could be improved. Regular newsletters, supplies of tea and coffee and a Christmas get together reinforce the team spirit. The experience of team working (the social aspect of the project) reinforces the enjoyment the volunteers derive from their acknowledged significant contribution in making our local history more accessible.**

**Since April 2010 volunteers have contributed over 1300 hours of work and made a major contribution to the project. As the project entered its final phase and it was extremely beneficial to the many other projects which the Local Studies team wanted to embark upon to harness the continuing enthusiasm of the volunteers more formally through the creation of a Local Studies Support Group.**

## Health and wellbeing

- 4.6 Facilitators of reminiscence work in social and support groups use archive materials, notably photographs, to stimulate discussions among older people. They are also used by health professionals for reminiscence therapy to support the management of dementia and other cognitive disabilities. The history of health services through archives has also been used for education and learning resources.

**Barking and Dagenham Archives and Local Studies Centre and Valance House Museum are committed to developing health and wellbeing pilot projects in consultation with GPs and Council colleagues, for people with dementia and those suffering from depression. In spring 2012 the service conducted a series of 10 reminiscence sessions with a group of volunteers over the age of 60. An initial discussion using a shopping basket sparked the enthusiasm of the group. Within a short period of time the group became self-sufficient with members choosing subjects for discussion and bringing in personal items that related to the subjects. By the end of the sessions new friendships had been created and several of the group had asked to become active in museum education sessions talking to children.**

## Developing skills for digital futures

- 4.7 As archive services embrace new technology they can use it both to deliver their services more efficiently and to engage with more people through digital and mobile technology. Engaging people in digital projects can, as well as developing interest and use in archives and local history, provide opportunities to develop skills in relation to digital technology.

### **The Library Time Machine**

The Kensington and Chelsea local history blog the “Library Time Machine” started in 2011 and has become a phenomenon with 12,154 page views per month. Images from the blog have been re-posted across the international media.

The users of the blog have added their own comments and reminiscences, joining a wider community of learning inside the worldwide blogosphere. It has brought together descendants of some of the subjects as well as professional and family historians. They even had a message from someone who featured in one of the pictures. Comments include

“How delighted I was when (my partner) discovered your site”

“These photos fill me with such wistful sadness “

“My Mum and dad were caretakers of Tower Cressey during the war... it was a really spooky place”

“I can’t tell you how happy I am to have found your site. I love these photo essays of the changing face of London”

## Economic prosperity

- 4.8 London has a rich and distinguished past as a centre for commerce and business. The city can tell the story of how the nation’s economic prosperity has, and continues to adapt to changing circumstances. Archives can contribute to regeneration projects and help us understand the past.

### **Shepherd’s Bush Market: using regeneration to understand the past**

Hammersmith and Fulham recently worked in collaboration with the Hammersmith Urban Studies Centre on a project with Year 3 pupils at Miles Coverdale School, Shepherd’s Bush. The pupils had been looking at Shepherd’s Bush Market in light of the redevelopment plans; meeting stallholders; talking to local residents and looking into the history of the market. The pupils met with the architects who are involved in the redevelopment project. During visits to the Archives Centre they completed activity sheets using sources from the Archives and were shown copies of The Shepherd’s Bush Gazette from 1964. The pupils and teachers were very engaged with the materials and asked lots of questions. Here are some quotes:

- Meanwell: I didn’t realise that the market has changed so much since it began
- Chantai: I learnt that they keep old newspapers in the archive. I enjoyed seeing the microfilm
- Mohammed: I never knew the market was nearly 100 years old. I didn’t know they used to sell horse meat and rabbits at the market
- Fariah: I learnt that some shops have been passed down through generations

## 5. Current and future trends

### The audience for history

- 5.1 There is a massive appetite and audience for history of all kinds, particularly family and local history. This is demonstrated by television, popular culture and the internet.
- 5.2 Since it was first broadcast in 2004, the BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?* has maintained audience figures exceeding 6 million. There is a print and online magazine that maintains interest between broadcasts, and websites to give practical support and tell people about current events happening across the country. Family history continues to attract a lot of people.
- 5.3 There are 1 billion searchable family history records on ancestry.co.uk. They claim that 80% of British people consider knowing their family history to be important.
- 5.4 In many ways, there has never been a better time for archives and local studies to tap into a bigger audience for their services.

### Visits to archive centres and use of websites

- 5.5 The most recent Taking Part Survey published by the DCMS (September 2013) shows a steady downward trend in the number of people visiting an archive or record office in person. The available data indicate that London follows this national trend.

**Percentage of the population of England who has visited an archive or records office (own time and voluntary)**

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	July 2012 - June 2013
5.9	5.0	4.9	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.7	3.7

- 5.6 In contrast, the numbers of people accessing archives through websites is increasing at a greater rate.

**Percentage of the population of England who has visited an archive or records office website**

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	July 2012 - June 2013
9.7	10.5	11.0	11.0	N/A	10.9	11.6	13.5	13.1

- 5.7 These trends are similar for public libraries - online access is increasing while physical visits are declining. In the case of museums and heritage sites, however, the number of people making personal visits continues to increase (as do the numbers visiting their websites).
- 5.8 The shift to online catalogues and digital archive collections will continue, enabling people to access information from their home, place of study or work and, increasingly, on the move.
- 5.9 There is no doubt that this is happening in archive services in London, but the shift is not happening on the scale or at the speed that it could.

### Resources to meet demand

- 5.10 The deployment of resources does not reflect this shift from traditional access routes to increased online access and digital engagement.
- 5.11 The main focus of archive and local studies staff appears to be in operating the centres, maintaining opening hours and ensuring that staff are available to help visitors. Yet fewer visitors are coming to the centres, and anecdotal evidence suggests that these visitors are frequent visitors – the loyal few coming many times. The user base for online resources is expanding and yet almost every service in London feels that there is insufficient investment in this area – the Heritage Change Programme survey showed that 75% of archives staff state that they do not have the skills or resources to exploit new online technologies.
- 5.12 The data available for service costs is insufficiently consistent or robust to derive meaningful unit costs or comparisons between services. A general picture could look like this (NOTE, this is not an average or presented as typical, but as an illustration of a possible methodology to derive a cost per visit):

<b>Population</b>	<b>200,000</b>
<b>Number of visitors to the archive centre in a year</b>	<b>7,400</b>
(based on 3.7% from the Taking Part Survey)	
<b>Number of visits per day</b>	<b>25</b>
(based on 300 days per year)	
<b>Number of visits per hour open</b>	<b>3</b>
(based on 8 hours per day)	
<b>Cost of opening the centre (per hour)</b>	<b>£16</b>
(estimate based on one member of staff plus overheads)	
<b>Cost per visit</b>	<b>£5</b>

- 5.13 The above model is simplistic. It does not, for example, include premises costs or costs of materials and maintenance of collections and facilities. It also assumes an even spread of visits and this is not the case in reality. A critical question is whether a cost of £5 per visitor (it is likely to be more than this) represents good value.

- 5.14 In London the total revenue budget ranges from just under £40,000 per year to just over £400,000 per year. Based on a standard residential population of 200,000 (this varies, of course) and a standard number of visitors based on 3.7% from the Taking Part Survey, the indicative unit costs begin to look like this:

Population	Revenue budget £	Cost per resident £	No. of visitors	Cost per visitor £
200,000	40,000	0.20	7,400	5.41
200,000	60,000	0.30	7,400	8.11
200,000	80,000	0.40	7,400	10.81
200,000	100,000	0.50	7,400	13.51
200,000	120,000	0.60	7,400	16.22
200,000	140,000	0.70	7,400	18.92
200,000	160,000	0.80	7,400	21.62
200,000	180,000	0.90	7,400	24.32
200,000	200,000	1.00	7,400	27.03
200,000	300,000	1.50	7,400	40.54
200,000	400,000	2.00	7,400	54.05

While the unit costs per resident are relatively low, the unit cost per visitor could be very high indeed.

- 5.15 Each service needs to consider its own costs and usage to derive a more accurate calculation. There will also be local factors that will affect the costs and these could have an acceptable explanation or rationale.
- 5.16 Related to the potentially high cost of physical visits is the opportunity cost of maintaining the current arrangement. In other words, while the current walk-in offer is potentially high in cost and reaching a limited number of people, the opportunity to invest in the growth area – online access – is being lost.
- 5.17 The available data are insufficiently detailed or robust to provide a definitive analysis of the situation. However, there is a clear indication that around 75% of staff time is required to meet the operational needs of the centres’ opening times – guiding visitors, retrieving documents, assisting with equipment and reprographics.
- 5.18 Not all enquiries require the same high level of expertise of centre staff. The ‘on-demand’ model does not filter enquiries or manage them in a way that matches the complexity with the staff expertise. Highly qualified staff can spend a disproportionate amount of time on routine work, tasks that could be performed by para professionals, administrative staff or volunteers. Holding on to the traditional ‘on demand’ model means that scarce, high quality staff resources are being used to support the relatively small number of physical visitors at the expense of the opportunity to deploy them more effectively in extending the reach and the range of the service.

- 5.19 Developing digital resources and engagement requires substantial investment that is not possible within existing resources – unless there is a decision to switch resources from one area to another.
- 5.20 In other words, and in business terms, the main assets of the service are deployed on what is the diminishing side of demand, leaving scarcer resources to meet the growth areas of digital access and community engagement.
- 5.21 There is some concern that digital access will lead to a further decline in physical visits. This need not be the case. The Taking Part survey results indicate that physical visits to museums is increasing alongside online engagement. Museums have increased the range and quality of visitor experiences. Changing exhibitions, talks, activities, events and learning programmes have all helped to attract more visitors. Archives could benefit from initiatives such as these to enrich the visitor experience.
- 5.22 The case studies in Section 3 show that, given the opportunity, archive and local studies staff are, increasingly, engaging with residents through volunteering, digital access, and outreach / learning programmes and projects.
- 5.23 The shift to an active learning experience is key to the future sustainability of the services. It is also a huge challenge, requiring service transformation, a hard look at priorities and a commitment and willingness to effect changes that will engage many more people.

## 6. Service transformation for efficiency

### Efficiency through shared service arrangements

- 6.1 Councils continue to be encouraged to consider shared service arrangements – not just for archives and local studies. This can be a contentious area (some doubt the efficacy of it, others see it as a good idea but find that achieving it is a complex process).
- 6.2 In 2011 the elected members of Bexley and Bromley agreed to a shared services approach for their library services (including archives and local studies). Their experience ([link](#)) demonstrates how this can be achieved with substantial public benefits and, at the same time, achieve efficiency savings – the shared library services project is saving Bexley more than £400,000 a year and Bromley £300,000. The two archive and local studies share a management post and benefit from the integration of strategic management and back office functions. Over time there will be the potential to explore further integration, including the possibility of direct customer facing services.
- 6.3 The Triborough initiative (Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster) has brought about the joint management of the library and archives services while retaining the individual identity and sovereignty of the constituent authorities. Using existing legislation and powers - Section 113 of the Local Government Act (1972) – the changes delivered savings of over £1 million and supported service developments that have increased customer satisfaction. Although the focus of changes (and savings) has been on senior management posts, support functions (back office) and combined strategic service such as reference and information, the platform has been created that would enable further integration for efficiency and service improvement.
- 6.4 Although there are differences between the Bexley and Bromley and the Triborough arrangements, both serve as innovative models for the future. Both attest to the importance of securing the support of elected members at an early stage. Political will is vital.
- 6.5 Even if there is no appetite for integration on this scale, two or more boroughs could consider integration of the archives and local studies functions. The potential savings would be much more modest than those in the Bexley and Bromley and Triborough arrangements but could, nevertheless, be worthwhile considering.
- 6.6 It might be possible, for example, to share a senior archivist post across a number of boroughs. That post holder could act as strategic lead and senior advisor and could manage a process of service redesign and change based on agreed principles and objectives. This arrangement could be extended to other levels of staff.



- 6.7 It is difficult to predict what efficiency savings might be delivered by such an arrangement. An estimate can only be made with a specific scenario. If there are boroughs that wish to consider such a way forward with others (not necessarily neighbouring – although that has advantages) they could quickly estimate potential savings and outline the business case in order to test the proposition with elected members.
- 6.8 It is also worth noting that partnerships between an individual borough or group of boroughs and LMA could also be considered over a range of services.

### Efficiency through service redesign

- 6.9 Section 4 of this report indicates, in broad terms, the following analysis:
- Current arrangements in many services absorb a high proportion of scarce staff resources to operate the physical archive and local studies centres
  - The number of physical visits is declining or, at least, not growing. The costs of operating the centres is meeting the needs of a small number of people
  - This leaves only limited time and resources for developments that are critical to the longer term viability of the services
  - The traditional, personalised, on demand service is highly appreciated by the people who currently use it - but that comes at a high unit cost
- 6.10 It can be difficult to imagine other ways of doing things, especially when they have operated for a long time and are valued by people. However, a shift from an operating model that is based on ‘respond on demand’ to systems that ‘manage demand’ could have benefits – and might be essential to the sustainability of the services longer term.
- 6.11 Ideas that could start the process for redesign might start with “what if”:
- Opening hours were reduced
  - Or some services were only available at certain times e.g. archivist available on Tuesdays, by appointment, for specialist advice
  - Workshops / group sessions were programmed for certain times of the week e.g. family history mornings
  - Document retrieval was restricted to certain/days/times and by pre-arrangement
- 6.12 It is inevitable that there would be some resistance to these ideas from current users and, possibly, staff. Introducing new ways of working will require a clear explanation of the underpinning purpose of the changes and the potential benefits being sought.

6.13 The service redesign could:

- Free up valuable staff time for investment in better digital access to the collections
- Enable the service to develop an enriched visitor experience e.g. with programmes of workshops and learning sessions
- Help the service to reach many more people
- Release capacity to contribute to partnership working with other Boroughs
- Deliver savings

(See also Section 7.23 on using redesign to create and develop a new Partnership)

6.14 The service redesign could also help to develop the roles of volunteers. Volunteering in archives is already at a high level and has the potential to be larger in scale and wider in scope. However, the recruitment, training and management of volunteers require staff time. The capacity released through service redesign could enable paid staff to deliver a development programme for volunteers, investing in their enthusiasm and commitment and increasing their knowledge and skills. In return, volunteers could take on wider roles within the centre e.g. assisting visitors with basic enquiries and assistance in using equipment and searching online resources.

### A single archive service for London

6.15 Would it be possible to create a single archive service for London, merging all 33 services into a super pan-London service?

6.16 This idea has a spectrum of options – one single archives centre – one main centre and some (perhaps four) secondary centres – one store – one catalogue. There are many permutations and the option presents, at least in theory, some potential efficiencies.

6.17 However, the single service option would be difficult to achieve:

- There is likely to be resistance from councils and local people to moving their archives from the boroughs to a central location. Each service has a distinctive character rooted in the community it serves. There is a danger that this would be lost and it goes against the direction set by most services to work with local communities in the appreciation of their own history and engage them in exploring and working with their archives.
- It would require significant capital investment – even the largest of the current premises (LMA) could not accommodate all the storage and public facilities that would be required.

- Revenue savings from premises would, at best, be marginal. The current customer facing facilities are, in almost all cases, part of a multi-functional building. The contributions to the premises costs of a new single facility are likely to equal (and quite likely to exceed) any revenue from the alternative use of current premises.
  - The governance of, in effect, a new service would be complicated by the mix of local authorities, trusts, joint management arrangements and outsourced services.
- 6.18 Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums operates the archive services on behalf of five councils. In evaluating their changes they concluded:
- The potential for service improvements in mergers is significant
  - There are likely to be some savings associated with mergers but unless you are doing significant realignment of services the achievable cost savings may be relatively small
  - With the will to work together, much can be achieved without formal mergers
- 6.19 The lesson that a merger without service redesign will not deliver significant efficiency is an important one for London archives.
- 6.20 There is little evidence that there is an appetite for this option. A full business case would be required, including the identification of risks and clarification of the relationship between any new organisation and the constituent councils and elected members.
- 6.21 It is probably more productive to consider other options that would be achievable without the complexities of the single pan-London service.

### Efficiency through collaboration

- 6.22 Joint time-limited projects can deliver benefits. Working together in this way is often a response to funding opportunities from external bodies. The temporary increase in funding can be used for additional staff capacity, sometimes by releasing permanent staff to develop new services.
- 6.23 External funding opportunities for archives are not as numerous or large scale as those for museums and libraries.
- 6.24 The benefits of these projects are in service improvement rather than operational efficiency savings. It is also the case, for most projects, that the benefits are short lived and are not sufficiently embedded in the core service.
- 6.25 Joint projects have been useful but, in themselves, will not deliver the scale or speed of change that is needed for archive services to meet the challenges of the moment.

- 6.26 Collaboration on a bigger scale and through a more formal process than time-limited projects could enable the archive and local studies services to:
- Develop a shared strategy for the future
  - Optimise the return on investment in their current services
  - Co-ordinate programmes for the essential cataloguing and digitisation work that is needed for people to access the archives
  - Share resources to deliver new services and ways of working that are currently under-developed and would be impossible for individual services to achieve on their own – these range from digital engagement to better marketing and promotion
  - Develop as a strong collective that will be better positioned to attract external funding and investment
  - Work more effectively with other heritage services on joint initiatives and marketing with local authority/trust museum and heritage services
  - Work more effectively with the wide range of other archive services in London
- 6.27 Some kind of formal partnership arrangement that combines the individual services to maximise the benefits of collaboration could be the way forward.

## 7. Creating a new London Archives Partnership

### Why a partnership is important

- 7.1 The capacity of individual borough services to play an active part in collaborative projects is severely limited. Even the bigger services are struggling to meet demand and respond fully to the opportunities presented by digital developments. A collaborative response to the challenges and opportunities could create a collective strategy that would be better placed to meeting the increasingly complex demands of existing and potential users and strengthen the position of the local authority archives and local studies services.
- 7.2 A London Archives Partnership (LAP) could bring together the boroughs that are prepared to work together for change. As with any partnership, this would involve both give and take. Some aspects of the partnership will be more attractive to some than others and some aspects might even go against the grain of current ways of doing things. For all members of the partnership the benefits of the collective will have to be set against the freedom of independence. There will be aspects of the partnership that could be optional but there will be a core of agreed commitments that anyone joining would have to adhere to.
- 7.3 The Partnership could work, regardless of the governance of individual services. A council run service, a trust or external contractor could all be valid and equal members in the Partnership.

### Example Partnership – Greater Manchester

- 7.4 The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership was formalised in 2012. In its first year it has already achieved significant progress and results:
- Greater Manchester Lives – a digital one stop shop for archives and local history has been launched [www.gmlives.org.uk](http://www.gmlives.org.uk)
  - GM1914 – The First World War in Manchester – a project with over 30 volunteers to create a series of blogs based on the collections. Taster blogs have been posted <http://gm1914.wordpress.com>
  - Business records - working together in a bid for £75,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant to use volunteers to digitise and catalogue business records and to work more closely with the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce.
- 7.5 The Partnership's programme of Working Towards Archives Accreditation has created the following joint policies and procedures
- Collections Development Policy
  - De-Accessioning and Re-appraisal Policy

- Cataloguing Guidelines
- Accessioning Standard
- Digitisation Guidelines
- Access Policy

7.6 A skills gap analysis has also been undertaken. This has identified a number of training priorities for staff that can help inform future training plans and funding applications.

### Vision and statement of purpose

7.7 It will be important to have a united vision and statement of purpose. The vision should reflect the essence of *Archives for the 21st Century* (see page 2) and the *Cultural Metropolis* (see page 3). An overarching vision and strategy would ensure that all services were heading in the same direction, even if the pace at which individual services could move might vary. The strategy would identify the ambition and goals in relation to key areas including:

- Contributing to council priorities, especially in relation to identity, sense of place and pride in our communities
- Reaching more people – raising awareness and appreciation of archives and how the services support community identity and sense of place; engaging with people through local and community focused programmes and projects; increasing learning and volunteering opportunities; supporting communities to create and interpret their own archives in co-production
- Improving access – making current access better and encouraging channel shift to give people more choice on how to access the services
- Ensuring archives are part of the digital and mobile technology generation and able to adapt and respond to future change and development
- Ensuring that archives are recognised and part of the cultural landscape of London

7.8 It will also be important, assuming that the new organisation might seek charitable status, to ensure that the statement of purpose will meet the requirements of the Charity Commission. The Partnership could be eligible for charitable status under any or all of the following purposes in the Charities Act: :

- The advancement of education (b)
- The advancement of citizenship or community development (e)
- The advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science (f)

7.9 To satisfy the 'public aspect' of public benefit, the purpose must:

- Benefit the public in general, or a sufficient section of the public
- Not give rise to more than incidental personal benefit

7.10 A statement of purpose could look something like the following:

### **London Archives Partnership exists to:**

- **Provide the public with the best possible access to the documented history of London held by local authorities**
- **Increase the awareness and use of the rich and diverse collections by many more people**
- **Provide the best possible advice and support to all users**
- **Maximise scarce resources by working collaboratively**
- **Invest in the digital access to collections and services**
- **Develop the interpretation of and inter-connection between digital resources to provide a richer experience for users**
- **Provide a better means to attract external funding – increasingly external funders look to support collaborative rather than individual projects**

7.11 If the general principle of creating a Partnership is accepted it will be necessary to get appropriate legal advice on the objects of the organisation.

### **What the core commitments might be**

7.12 Each service joining the Partnership would be expected to agree to certain commitments. An example of what these might be:

- **To aspire to and actively plan for accreditation**
- **To work to minimum standards for the digitisation and documentation of resources**
- **To review the service delivery model to release capacity for collaborative projects**
- **To align the service delivery model with other members of the partnership and, as appropriate, participate in shared delivery models e.g. enquiries**
- **To participate in appropriate shared projects, including releasing the agreed staff capacity to deliver the outcomes of the projects**
- **To make a commitment to the principles of collaboration, actively seeking ways to achieve service improvement and developments through shared resources, such as a single catalogue, rather than making individual arrangements**
- **To make the agreed financial contributions for the agreed period of time**
- **To promote the partnership alongside their individual service**

- 7.13 A London Archives Partnership (LAP) could be a co-operative venture. No partner would have more stake than any other, but all would be committed to the overarching purpose.

### Some key questions and considerations

- 7.14 **Would the partnership need all 33 local authorities to be members?**

The idea of a pan-London archives and local studies partnership is an attractive one. In reality, for various reasons, this might not be possible without long and protracted negotiations. It would be possible to proceed with less than 100% take-up. Having said that, less than 30% would not be a strong starting point. If ten authorities were willing to create the partnership it would be viable and could be built on in the future. There might be differential benefits for authorities that join at the start and those that join later.

- 7.15 **Is the partnership for local authorities only?**

In drawing up the purpose and objects of the partnership and trust consideration should be given to the possibility/desirability of extending membership in the future to other archive and local studies services.

Organisations that have a close affinity with the purpose of local authority services could be considered for membership (this might be an affiliate or associate membership rather than a full membership). An example might be Eastside Community Heritage, a not for profit company with charitable status that emerged from local authority services and projects. It works with and complements the work of local authorities.

As it can be difficult to change the terms of the partnership or trust at a later date it is important to consider the longer term possibilities at the outset. Subject to legal advice, it is worthwhile considering the broadest terms for the partnership.

### Establishing the Partnership and setting up funding

- 7.16 If the idea of a Partnership is considered worthwhile by a sufficient number of local authorities to make it worthwhile it will require resources to get it established and operating.
- 7.17 In the current climate it is difficult to identify obvious sources of funding for a new venture like this. Options include:
1. Each member of the partnership contributes a sum of money to a fund to establish the Partnership and cover running costs for the first year - ideally this would be for first two years. The National Archives could be asked to make a contribution to this fund.



2. The nascent Partnership seeks funding from an external source to help it get established and operate for two years.
3. Each member of the Partnership contributes staff time in kind to co-ordinate projects that are of mutual benefit.

7.18 All the options have their difficulties.

- Option 1 requires local authorities to make a financial contribution, perhaps in the region of £1,000 for each of the two years. It would be possible to demonstrate the potential return on that investment. It might be possible to consider short term efficiency savings from service redesign to offset this. See also section 7.20 below.
- Option 2 would be dependent on finding a suitable funding source. It would also require a 'lead' authority to be the applicant and to host the project management.
- Option 3 appears to be the most straightforward but it could be the most difficult to achieve. In practice, such arrangements tend to break down when the operational pressures of the constituent services take priority.

7.19 There are other options, mainly variants of the three above. Indeed, perhaps a mix of all three would provide the most productive way forward.

7.20 The idea of releasing funds from local authorities to fund a co-operative venture seems to go against the grain of cost reductions. But it is possible to look at it another way. Investing a relatively modest amount could yield savings in other parts of the service or contribute to service developments that would not otherwise be possible in the current financial climate.

7.21 In dealing with the current budget pressures, services are being encouraged to be innovative. The LAP would be a new way of doing things and could be considered as an 'invest to save' initiative.

7.22 A solution whereby local authorities make no financial contribution but gain substantial benefits is unrealistic. It also creates an expectation that the Partnership is 'free' and can be dispensed with when no longer useful.

7.23 Individual services could, however, enter into the spirit of the partnership – especially in relation to reviewing the service delivery model (see 6.9 – 6.14 above) – and take steps that would deliver savings that could, in part, be used as the contribution to the partnership. For example:

- Opening hours are reduced in order to make savings and release staff capacity for development work

- A proportion of cashable savings and some of the staff time released could be used towards funding the Partnership and providing staff support in-kind to collaborative projects
- The individual authority could make efficiency savings AND the Partnership could be created and operated for two years.

7.24 This is just one example of how the needs of the individual authority and the ambition to create the Partnership could be aligned.

### Partnership arrangements

7.25 Although the LAP would be a collective of equal shareholders, the partnership would need to have a co-ordinating (lead) body to manage and administer the collaborative work and ensure that the benefits being aspired to are delivered.

7.26 It is suggested that the City of London through London Metropolitan Archives could take this co-ordinating role, acting as the exchequer and secretariat for the LAP and providing officer capacity to ensure that the appropriate plans are in place, projects are delivered and reviewed and to help steer the future development of the partnership.

7.27 A critical role for the central administration would be to identify potential collaborative projects and to seek external funding to support these.

7.28 The City of London has, as one of its three primary functions, the aim to provide valued services to London and the nation as a whole, including being one of the most significant arts sponsors in the UK and providing support for economic regeneration in the surrounding boroughs. The City already acts in a co-ordinating role with the London boroughs across other policy/function areas in London

7.29 Within this function, the City Corporation is the most appropriate body to co-ordinate the set up and running of the new partnership. If it is willing to take on this role the partnership could benefit from the depth of experience in areas such as philanthropy and other fund raising.

7.30 Clearly, it would make sense for the City of London to base the LAP in London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), providing accommodation and ICT services as a benefit in kind to the partnership of London boroughs.

7.31 Nevertheless, it will be important for any borough joining the partnership to make a financial contribution to the management and administration of the LAP. It is also hoped that The National Archives (TNA) will invest in the partnership, at least at the set-up stage, as part of its developing role in relation to local authority archives and to demonstrate its commitment to supporting new ways of working for the sector.

## Governance and legal status of the Partnership

- 7.32 The arrangements described above could be put in place fairly easily and would meet the needs of managing joint projects. One of the aims of creating the Partnership is to attract external funding. An organisation with charitable status would be better placed to do this than a local authority or an informal consortium of authorities.
- 7.33 A Company Limited by Guarantee with Charitable Status is perhaps the most straight forward model, but there are other options.
- 7.34 A charitable trust with separate powers and duties to the local authorities could be more attractive to potential philanthropists or fund granting bodies.
- 7.35 It would take time to establish this body and it would take time for it to attract enough funds to provide a funding stream to the partnership.

## Benefits of the Partnership

- 7.36 A new Partnership for archives and local studies services could help lead service transformation by:
- Developing a shared strategy that aligns archives with their councils' priorities
  - Maximising the benefits of staff and volunteers to achieve the best return on investment
  - Increasing reach through community engagement and learning programmes
  - Improving access through better catalogues and digitisation
  - Using the larger scale of the Partnership to attract inward investment and external funding for a sustainable business model
  - Working together as part of the wider cultural sector of London
  - Raising the profile of archive and local studies services – making them visible to and valued by customers and policy makers
  - To broker joint arrangements across services

## Priority areas for the Partnership

- 7.37 The short to medium term priorities for the Partnership could include:
- Accreditation plans and support
  - Income and fund raising plan
  - Joint projects plan:
  - Shared images portal

- Digitisation partnerships
- Education and learning resources
- Volunteer policies and development plans; mutual support
- Evidence based impact study
- Brand and identity for the partnership/trust
- Advocacy and positioning
- Brokerage of joint service provision
- To coordinate archival involvement with the Greater London Authority's London Curriculum, both in content development and as hosts for school visits
- Shared catalogue across London by joining boroughs to the existing AIM25 network
- Marketing and outreach around commemorative events e.g. First World War, 1965 anniversary of the London Boroughs formation

### Next steps

7.38 The proposals outlined in the report could be progressed as follows:

- ALCL Executive considers the conclusions and recommendations of the Draft Report, 10 December 2013
- Full meeting of ALCL on 31 January 2014 considers the proposals
- All boroughs are asked to endorse the principles of the partnership and indicate if they are willing to be founding members
- An inaugural meeting of the Partnership – in part, facilitated discussion – takes place in February/March 2014 to agree the purpose and priorities for the Partnership and an action plan to take the Partnership forward.

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

- 8.1 The archives and local studies services are providing invaluable access to the documented past of London.
- 8.2 Across London's Boroughs, there are excellent examples of how archives and local studies are actively engaged with communities and contribute to their councils' priorities.
- 8.3 Interest in family and local history continues to grow and there is a large potential audience for archives and local studies. That audience is either unaware of the services or is unable to access them.
- 8.4 In considering what efficiency savings might be possible it was identified that:
- The current level of funding for archive and local studies services is a very small part of a council's budget
  - Most councils have already delivered efficiencies by combining archives with other cultural and/or leisure services to streamline management and administration.
  - The arrangements in Bexley and Bromley and Triborough show that a shared services model can deliver significant savings and at the same time provide a sound platform on which to develop services in the future. In such cases the archives and local services are a part of a larger arrangement that includes library services. Other Boroughs should consider shared service arrangements like these.
  - A single pan-London archives service is a complex proposition. So complex in fact, that it would take a long time to design in organisational terms and is likely to require significant capital and transition costs.
  - A new, formal Partnership between Boroughs would enable services to deliver much more than they can at present and enable councils to optimise the return on their investment
  - Service redesign, with a focus on shifting scarce staff resources from the 'on-demand' physical visits to an investment in digital access and new ways to engage with audiences, could manage demand better and deploy resources in the growth areas rather than the parts that are in decline.
- 8.5 Greater collaboration, through a new and formal Partnership, would enable services to deliver much more than they can at present and enable councils to optimise the return on their investment.

## Recommendations

- 8.6 ALCL and TNA are recommended to:
8. **Recognise and promote the valuable contribution that archive and local studies services in London are already making to council priorities, especially in the areas of personal and community identity, learning, skills and civil society**
  9. **Recognise the already low levels of funding for the services and the continuing financial pressures. Encourage authorities to consider service redesign with a view to:**
    - d) **Maximising assets, especially staff and volunteers, to ensure that councils achieve the best return on investment and deliver continuous service improvement**
    - e) **Meeting the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology to improve access for and engagement with the public**
    - f) **Developing their work in community engagement, making it possible for even more people to enjoy their past and be actively involved in capturing the present for the future**
  10. **Note the efficiency savings that have been achieved through shared service arrangements in Bexley and Bromley and the Triborough and to encourage other Boroughs to consider whether this approach could be appropriate**
  11. **Agree that a new London Archives Partnership has the potential to support and develop services for the future by:**
    - d) **Working collaboratively on service redesign in order to better align resources to demand and release scarce resources to invest in new ways of working**
    - e) **Strengthening, through collective advantage, the ability to attract income and external funding to provide longer-term sustainability for the services**
    - f) **Creating a collective identity that will help raise the profile of archives and their work**
  12. **Agree a process and timeline to enable services to consider the advantages of the Partnership and decide whether they wish to join it. Key steps in that process will include:**
    - f) **Draft Statement of Purpose and Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership**
    - g) **Draft Strategy for the Partnership that aligns with councils' and Greater London Authority priorities**
    - h) **Outline Development Plan to ensure the services maximise their assets and continue their role in community engagement and active learning**
    - i) **Project Plan to create a virtual platform for the Partnership to provide integrated online access to the collections and services**

- j) A Resource Plan to include an agreed commitment of staff time and resources to support the work of the Partnership and maximise the return on investment for all services**
- 13. Ask the City of London Corporation to provide governance and leadership support to enable the Partnership to be set up and to review the governance when the longer term vision and development plans are clear**
- 14. Continue to keep organisations from the wider archives sector informed of developments and explore opportunities for further collaboration**

## Appendix 1

### Project Board

Sue Mckenzie – Brent

Edward Rogers – Hackney

Tina Morton – The National Archives

Geoff Pick – London Metropolitan Archives and Archives for London

Souraya Ali – London Councils

### Organisations and individuals consulted

Archive and local studies staff through workshops

Eastside Community Heritage

Greater London Authority

A New Direction

Nick Barratt Genealogical Consultant (including Who Do You Think You Are?)

Ben Lee, Shared Intelligence