

Committee: Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee	Dated: 25 January 2021
Subject: London Metropolitan Archives: accreditation	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 7, 9, 10 and 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Peter Lisley, Assistant Town Clerk and Director of Major Projects	For Information
Report author: Geoff Pick, Director, London Metropolitan Archives	

Summary

This report provides details of the award of Archive Service Accreditation to London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) which was reported verbally to Members at the meeting of this Committee in November 2020. Accreditation is the national quality standard in the archive sector and LMA was one of the first archive services in the UK to achieve this status in 2014. It has to be re-applied for in full every six years. The overall view of the assessors was that they: *welcomed this impressive application from a major archive service which delivers across its extensive remit. They noted particularly the service's success as a core element of the Corporation of London's work; its proactive and successful engagement across diverse communities; a very strong management approach; and the range of improvement activity seen since its original successful application for the award.*

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Archive Service Accreditation is the single quality standard for archive services of all kinds across the UK and is supported by the sector's professional and advocacy body - the Archives and Records Association - as well as national bodies in the four home countries - The National Archives, the National Records of Scotland, the Scottish Council on Archives, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the Welsh Government through its Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales division and the Archives and Records Council Wales.
2. The Standard looks at how an archive service acquires, preserves and provides access to their collections over the long term, through the management of risks and by planning for change. Archive Service Accreditation also represents a

pathway for the ongoing development of a service. An accredited archive service delivers within a framework of professionally recognised standards, supported by effective resourcing and management structures.

Current Position

3. The Standard is divided into three sections - Organisational Health, Collections and Stakeholders and their experiences. In addition to the general assessment quoted in the Summary, the Accreditation Panel made the following overall comments on LMA's delivery in each section:
4. Organisational Health: *The service has a clear focus. It has a highly professional staff, across all areas, with strong support from interns and volunteers. There is an evident commitment to improvement in all areas and regular monitoring of progress. LMA is well-managed, with a strategic position within the wider corporate structure. Although there is some uncertainty around the Fundamental Review, the service appears financially secure and settled in its main accommodation in Northampton Road.*
5. Collections: *The LMA has a comprehensive suite of policies covering this area. The application and discussion during our visit shows how policy has informed planning and procedures to provide a coherent approach. The service is aware of challenges in terms of cataloguing and packaging and is taking steps to address these.*
6. Stakeholders and their experiences: *With input from across the service, particularly led by its Engagement and Learning, Public Services, Digital Services, and Graphical and Digital Collections Teams, the service has an excellent understanding of its audiences and its many stakeholders. There is a concern to extend its audiences and the service is looking to broaden its offer. LMA offers a wide variety of means of access to its collections, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how it can adapt to meet the demands of an online audience, also in a variety of ways.*
7. The Panel also gave specific feedback:
 - *London Metropolitan Archives's mission statement declares, "We aim to provide a world class service aspiring to the highest standards that is open and engaging, innovative, inclusive, secure and sustainable." It has demonstrated in this application how it is achieving this.*
 - *The service has excellent structures, and clear and coherent policies and procedures in place, to ensure the organisation is not complacent and continues to move forward, developing its staff, collections and audiences.*
 - *The service contributes significantly to the achievement of wider City of London Corporation goals but it also maintains a wide range of partnerships and relationships with different sectors, organisations and communities.*

- *Its development of a comprehensive digital preservation solution, incorporating digital preservation and access into business as usual for all staff is particularly impressive.*

8. The Panel also lists required and improvement actions resulting from the assessment. Required actions need to be addressed to meet accreditation in future. Improvement actions point to areas of future service development. The actions are followed by LMA's response.

9. Required actions

- *Make the case for vacant senior professional posts to be filled by appropriate staff.* While the value of the two current vacant senior professional posts at LMA is clearly understood within the department, it is also clear that the City is under significant financial pressure at the moment. Changes have been made to adapt LMA's work to accommodate the deletion of both posts as part of its delivery of the 2021-22 savings targets.
- *Continue to increase the proportion of the LMA's archives available through the online catalogue.* This continues as part of LMA's mainstream work.
- *Continue to increase the proportion of the archives with appropriate secondary packaging.* This continues as part of LMA's mainstream work.

10. Improvement actions

- *Ensure all long-term storage accommodation is maintained within current environmental standards for relative humidity and temperature.* This continues as part of LMA's mainstream work and is reflected in the Cultural Services Risk Register.
- *Seek external certification of the service's TiTAN Digital Repository solution.* This will be progressed in 2021-22.
- *Consider introducing sample environmental monitoring inside archive boxes and other packaging.* This will be progressed in 2021-22
- *Maintain the storage and exhibition space at current levels.* There are no plans for this space to be changed.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. Strategic implications – the assessment confirms LMA's value and role in the City Corporation and its support for the Corporate Plan as well as its position as a flagship service in the archive sector within London, nationally and internationally.

12. Financial and resource implications – there are no significant implications beyond those recognised in the 2021-22 savings targets

13. Equalities implications – LMA has a strong track record in the area of equalities, diversity and inclusion, as noted by the assessors. It is currently looking to build on this across all its work.
14. Climate implications - LMA will continue to maintain and develop its position as one of the City's most energy efficient sites with a current energy performance operational rating of 43.
15. Risk and Security implications - one of the City's key risks is the potential for damage to or loss of the extremely valuable and often unique collections held by LMA, through inadequate intellectual and physical preservation. This risk is managed on an ongoing basis and is also reflected in the Town Clerk's Cultural Services Business Plan.

Conclusion

16. London Metropolitan Archives will continue to build on this extremely positive external assessment of its work both within the City Corporation and in the archive sector more widely.

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