



Norfolk County Council

Your views on proposals that would see service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office

Overview

Norfolk County Council helps make the county better for everyone who lives or works here or travels to Norfolk. The many services we run include ensuring children and young people have the best start in life, providing the fire and rescue service, protecting vulnerable people, maintaining a safe road system and helping improve the economy. We spend over a billion pounds every year providing public services.

The use of our services, particularly by those becoming older, is growing every year. Demand is rising but the amount of money we receive from central government is declining; we now receive £204 million less each year, compared to 2011/12, and this is also expected to fall to zero by 2020/21.

We have developed a financial strategy to overcome these challenges through these principles:

- Offering our help early to prevent and reduce demand for specialist services
- Joining up our work so that similar activities and services are easily accessible, done well and done once
- Being business-like and making the best use of digital technology to ensure value for money
- Using evidence and data to target our work where it can make the most difference.

Since 2011/12 we have saved the best part of £364 million, including £246 million of efficiency savings. We are proposing to save £79 million, including new saving proposals for 2019/20 to 2021/22, over the next three years and we are also identifying ways of bridging a remaining gap of £45.98 million.

Even though we are proposing to increase council tax next year, by the minimum required to put our finances on a sound footing, the amount of money we hope to raise wouldn't be enough to balance our budget.

This means we must continue to make some difficult decisions about how we spend your money.

The council has therefore been looking at how we can save money on all our services, community and environmental services.

We are proposing to change the focus of our staff which would mean a reduction in opening hours for the Norfolk Record Office searchroom and affect the level of some other services that we provide.

This proposal would save us £75,000 in 2019/20.

Why we are consulting

We want to find out what people think about our proposal and how it might affect them if it went ahead.

We are consulting through:

- This online consultation, which is also available as a paper copy.
- Paper copies available in the Norfolk Record Office searchroom.
- Individual letters and / or meetings with stakeholders including Heritage Lottery Fund, Norfolk Record Society, Norfolk Family History Society, Norfolk Archives and Heritage Development Foundation, Diocese of Norwich, Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society and Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group.

We are consulting from 5 November 2018 to 23 December 2018. Please note that if we receive any consultation responses after this date we cannot guarantee that we will be able to take them into account.

We will feed back the findings from our consultation to our county councillors as part of the evidence they will use to help them come to a decision about our proposals.

If you need a copy of this consultation document in a different format please email haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk, call 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

Personal information, confidentiality and data protection

We will use any personal information to understand how different groups of people feel about our proposals that would see service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office.

We will process any personal information we receive from you in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Norfolk County Council's data protection policy and guidelines. This means that Norfolk County Council will hold your personal data and only use it for the purpose for which it was collected, being this consultation. You can find a copy of our privacy statement at <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/privacy>

We won't identify individuals when reporting back our findings and under our record management policy we will keep this information for five years. We will also, under normal circumstances, not pass your personal data on to anyone else. However, we may be asked under access to information laws to publish or disclose some, or all, of the information you provide in response to this consultation. We will only do this where such disclosure will comply with such relevant information laws which include the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

You can choose not to take part in the consultation, to stop responding at any time, or to ignore any personal questions that you do not want to answer.

Background

The Norfolk Record Office collects and preserves unique archives relating to the history of Norfolk and makes them accessible to people in the county and across the world. Our team conserve documents, run education programmes, provide research advice and act as a first point of contact for people who are new to using the archives. As well as providing access to records used in historical research, the NRO acts a place of record for information relating to government, administration and citizenship.

Both the work of the Norfolk Record Office and the way that people access records is changing.

The NRO now provides many online services. In particular they issue copies of birth, death and marriage certificates. The NRO also take digital copies of historic records on request and charge for this service. Digital records can also be made available online. Whilst making the NRO collection more widely available, these services have also enabled the Record Office to increase its income generation by over 300% in the last five years. Although there have been changes in the way people access the NRO services, the level of use has never been higher.

One of the services that the Norfolk Record Office offers is a public searchroom where people can access the collection. This is open to anyone and is free of charge (many of the documents held by the NRO are covered by legislation and the public have a right of access to them). As well as accessing original documents produced from the strongrooms, the public can use microfilms, online and printed sources. An essential part of the service offered is face-to-face advice; without this people who use the service would have great difficulty navigating their way through the enormous amount of information available. An archivist and two or three members of support staff are needed to operate the searchroom.

The Norfolk Record Office has a gross budget of approximately £856,000 per year, £220,000 of which comes from income generation.

What we have considered when developing our proposals

When developing our proposals, we have taken the following things into account:

The changing nature of how people access our records and archives

Since 2010, there have been significant changes in the way people use our searchroom. Our figures show that whilst there has been a reduction in the number of users of microforms and published (known as surrogate sources) there has been a steady and, recently, increasing number of people using original documents.

The decline in the use of surrogate sources is almost entirely due to the number of sources now available on-line. The NRO has licensed key family history resources to three commercial websites. This means they are accessible from anywhere, 24 hours a day whilst providing an income stream to support the Record Office. For Norfolk residents, these websites can be accessed free of charge in the Record Office in Norwich and King's Lynn and the Norfolk Heritage Centre. One of the sites can also be accessed free of charge in libraries across the county.

Although significant in making some key sources available, online access to digitized collections represents only between four and five percent of the collection. The remainder is only accessible as original documents. Whilst more documents are digitized every year it is unlikely the proportion of the collection available online will grow beyond this as rates of accumulation exceed rates of digitization.

Another change in use is the widespread use of digital photography. In the past, many users of original documents had no choice but to spend many days in the searchroom taking notes. Nowadays, many users choose to purchase a photography permit and take their own digital images so that they can carry on their research later at home. Others choose not to visit the Record Office, but to pay to have archives digitized.

The numbers of people who use the different Record Office services

The average number of people using our different services on a weekly basis over the last 18 months are:

- Average searchroom Use: 91
- Remote access services: emails, letters, online orders etc: 285
- Attendance at education and outreach events: 192
- Sessions on online catalogue: 739

The length of time that people spend in the searchroom

Visitors using the searchroom tend to stay for a long time. We estimate the average length of a visit to the searchroom to be between three and four hours.

The numbers of people accessing the searchroom on different days

The average number of people using our searchroom each day over the last five years are:

Monday: 18

Tuesday: 17

Wednesday: 16

Thursday: 21

Friday: 19

How people use the Thursday late-night opening

We have monitored how the searchroom is used on our Thursday late-night opening. Most of those using our services on that evening are staying on from the afternoon rather than arriving later in the evening. We have looked at the number of document requests at our late-night openings over a period of 27 weeks.

Number of document requested after 5pm	Number of weeks
0	9
1-5	12
6+	6

This table shows, for example, that in nine of the 27 weeks we analysed, no documents were requested at our late-night opening. People could still be working in the searchroom on documents that they requested earlier on in the day.

The feedback we received during the last time we consulted on changes to the Norfolk Record Office.

Our previous consultation showed us the importance to users of the service of the searchroom being open on consecutive days. Some users may travel a considerable distance to use the Record Office and a mid-week break would not be welcome to them.

Actions we are already taking to make our searchroom more efficient

We now have fewer staff on duty in the searchroom. We've created a new flexible glass educational space within the Record Office. This means we can run groups and events with fewer staff. We have also increased the number of shelves. This means that more library items are available for public use without having to be requested.

In December, the service will further reorganise the searchroom to ensure that staffing is used as efficiently as possible.

Previous consultations

We consulted on proposals to reduce the opening hours, staffing and work of the Norfolk Record Office as part of our Re-imagining Norfolk budget consultation 2016-19.

We proposed to:

- Reduce the opening hours of the Norfolk Record Office to approximately 24 hours per week
- Only accept new items for the archives on two days a week by appointment
- Stage exhibitions when they are funded externally
- Stop purchasing documents to add to our collection
- Reduce the amount of conservation work we do; and
- Stop the archive specialists working at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library.

That proposal was to save approximately £148,000 (£86,000 in 2016-17, £20,000 in 2017-18 and £42,000 in 2018-19).

In responding to our consultation, of those that disagreed with proposal:

- half highlighted their view of the intrinsic value of preserving cultural heritage
- some made specific comments about the importance of protecting the conservation element of the service.

Of those that agreed with the proposal:

- some stated that they felt the service is not essential
- others agreed, with the proviso that the service remain in place in the long term.

Norfolk County Council decided not to go ahead with the proposal at that time.

Our proposal

We are proposing to refocus the work that our staff do. If we reduce the time staff spend in the search room we can use this time for digitising documents and producing copy certificates which would save money, maintain levels of income generation and increase the accessibility of our collection by putting more records online

The Norfolk Record Office searchroom is currently open for 41.5 hours each week:

Monday 9.00 - 17.00

Tuesday 9.30 - 17.00

Wednesday 9.00 - 17:00

Thursday 9.00 - 19:00

Friday 9.00 - 17:00

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We are proposing to reduce the number of hours that the searchroom would be open from 41.5 hours a week to between 28 and 30 hours a week. If these changes were to go ahead the searchroom would be open:

Tuesday 10.00 - 17.00

Wednesday 10.00 - 17.00

Thursday 10:00 - 17:00 (And until 19:00 one Thursday a month)

And either Monday or Friday 10:00 - 17.00

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Our proposal to prioritise the work of our staff on digitisation and certificates would also mean:

- There might be fewer education and outreach events.
- There would be fewer staff to help support volunteers and students on work experience.

- We would not be able to process and conserve as many documents. In other words, we would not be able to do as much work on existing items and new ones coming into our collection.

As part of this saving we are also proposing to save money by reducing the amount of conservation materials that we use. We would not compromise on the quality of the materials though.

If our proposal went ahead we would save £75,000 in 2019/20.

Who would be affected by our proposal and how

People who use our searchroom services would be affected by this proposal. The proposal could affect working people who may not be able to use the searchroom during working hours and relied on the Thursday late night opening. However, we are proposing to still have a late-night opening once a month.

Other people using record office services might be affected. The change in focus of staff might mean that there are fewer outreach and educational events for people to attend. The NRO may also not be able to support as many volunteers or people on work experience placements.

Some staff on temporary contracts would not have these renewed.

Have your say

1. Do you currently use Norfolk Record Office services? Please tick (✓) one only:

Yes

No

Not sure

2. How far do you agree or disagree with our proposal for service changes and a reduction in searchroom hours at Norfolk Record Office? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

3. Why do you say that? Please briefly write in below, including how the proposal might affect you:

4. As part of our proposal we are considering reducing the number of hours that the searchroom would be open. Currently the Norfolk Record Office is open Monday to Friday. If our proposal went ahead we would need to decide which hours to open. Which option, if any, would you prefer? Please select one only:

Open Monday to Thursday (Closed on Friday)

Open Tuesday to Friday (Closed on Monday)

Don't mind

Don't know

Other – please write in below

5. Why do you say that? Please write in below:

About you

6. Are you responding as...? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- An individual / member of the public
- A family
- On behalf of a voluntary or community group
- On behalf of a statutory organisation
- On behalf of a business
- A Norfolk County Councillor
- A district or borough councillor
- A town or parish councillor
- A Norfolk County Council employee

7. If you are responding on behalf of another organisation, what is the name of the organisation, group or business?

Please write your answer in the box:

8. Are you...? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify below)
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to self-describe please specify here:

7. How old are you? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Under 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65-74 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 75-84 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 85 or older | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 45-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Prefer not to say | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. Do you have any long-term illness, disability or health problem that limits your daily activities or the work you can do? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9. How would you describe your ethnic background? Please tick (✓) one answer only:

- White British
- White Irish
- White other
- Mixed / multiple ethnic group
- Asian or Asian British
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
- Prefer not to say
- Other ethnic background - please describe below

10. What is your first language?

Please write your answer in the box:

11. What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. NR4)

Please write your answer in the box:

How we will make our decision and report back to you

We will take a report about the findings to this consultation to our Communities Committee on 16 January 2019. The report will feed back what people have told us about the potential impact of our proposal. The feedback will also be reported at Full Council on 11 February 2019.

Our county councillors will consider the consultation responses we receive very carefully. In particular, they will take into account:

- The impact of any proposal on individuals, groups or communities and in particular on people identified as having 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. As well as this equality impact assessment, councillors will consider the impact of proposals on rural areas
- The views of people and stakeholders consulted
- The evidence of need and what is proven to work effectively and well
- The financial and legal positions and any constraints at the time
- Any potential alternative options, models or ideas for making the savings.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this and respond.

You can fill in our online feedback form at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/budget

You can send back a paper feedback form to:

Freepost Plus RTCL-XSTT-JZSK, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH.

However, if you want to help the council save money please use a stamp and send to this address: Stakeholder and Consultation Team, Norfolk County Council, Ground floor - south wing, County Hall, Martineau Lane, NR1 2DH.

You may wish to keep a copy of your response to our consultation for your own records.

Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please email us at haveyoursay@norfolk.gov.uk or contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.

November 2018
