

Bath Record Office:
Archives and Local Studies
Collections Development Policy
2020-2023

1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

Council Corporate Strategy

1.1 The Council's Corporate Strategy priorities aim to Improve People's Lives by:

- Addressing the climate emergency
- Preparing for the future
- Delivering for local residents
- Focusing on prevention
- Giving people a bigger say

1.2 BRO seeks to align all of its activities with these priorities.

Heritage Services' Service and Business Aims

1.3 BRO forms part of Heritage Services under the Economy & Growth Directorate of Bath & North East Somerset Council. The Heritage Services' Service Aims are to:

- Enhance the quality of life for residents of Bath & North East Somerset
- Maximise public enjoyment of the Council's world class heritage
- Enable people to learn from the activities and achievements of past and present societies
- Promote understanding and appreciation of different cultures
- Contribute to the district's economic prosperity through our Business Plan

1.4 To achieve these Service Aims we:

- Protect and develop the Council's unique historic collections and public buildings
- Plan for and invest in their sustainability
- Interpret them through displays, study facilities, learning programmes and special events
- Mount the best available exhibitions from other regional and national collections
- Sell high quality merchandise to complement our services
- Hire out historic venues for a wide range of events and activities
- Train and develop our staff to realise their full potential
- Consult widely with users and stakeholders on an ongoing basis
- Use information technology in accessible and imaginative ways
- Work in partnership with others wherever appropriate

1.5 Heritage Services' Business Aims are for ongoing sustainability in three equally important and inter-dependent activities:

- Conservation: preserving our heritage for present and future generations to enjoy
- Customer Care: meeting the needs of all our audiences, customers and guests
- Commercial Success: – maintaining our positive contribution to the Council's budget

1.6 To achieve these Business Aims, equal attention is devoted to these three core activities.

The BRO Mission Statement and Purpose

1.7 **Mission Statement:** Bath Record Office: Archives and Local Studies collects and keeps safe archives and local studies collections relating to Bath & North East Somerset and its people, it provides access to archives and local studies materials, promoting them for the benefit of the community, and it is the permanent home of the Council's archive.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Since the creation of the Record Office in 1967 many substantial and historically important archive collections have been received from private sources. In common with every other local authority record office, many important collections are received on deposit as a means of providing public access to unique historical sources. Many smaller collections received on loan or as a gift from private sources demonstrate the richness of the area's character and illustrate the lives of its people: business records from shopkeepers, tradespeople and solicitors; records and registers of the many non-conformist churches; charities, clubs and societies; photographs and prints; and family papers including diaries and correspondence of private individuals. Since 2005, the Archives have held the status of Designated Collection of outstanding national / international importance with Arts Council England (ACE).

2.2 Since 1996 there has been an agreement with Somerset Archives and Local Studies that newly discovered material relating to Bath & North East Somerset directly related to or forming part of an existing collection already housed at Somerset should be offered there in the first instance, and this policy continues that agreement. An exception to the geographical limit boundary may be made where a collection includes material relating to areas other than Bath & North East Somerset, but the division of the collection would involve the breaking-up of an archival entity. In this case, the relevant other record offices will be advised and agreement sought on the most appropriate repository for the collection.

3. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

3.1 The aim of this policy is to define how and why BRO develops its collections. It will also indicate the type of records that are under-represented within its holdings and describe the methods and strategies by which this situation is being addressed. This policy relates to all material (archives and local studies) pertaining to Bath & North East Somerset regardless of format.

4. COLLECTING STRATEGY

4.1 BRO collects archives and local studies material representing all aspects of life in Bath & North East Somerset. These include:

- Records of Bath & North East Somerset Council, both paper and digital.
- Records of national government (public records of local significance deposited under Section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, (the Act) such as those of coroners, courts and hospitals; and records presented under Section 3(6) of the Act).
- Archives generated by community groups, businesses, charities, societies, families, estates, individuals and other organisations (The Local Government (Records) Act, 1962).
- Records created by churches and faith groups, apart from records created by Church of England parishes which under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 are collected by the Somerset Heritage Centre.
- Local studies resources of importance to the interpretation and understanding of Bath & North East Somerset and its relevance in the artistic, social, cultural, architectural, scientific and historic heritage of the region, nation and the world in general.

4.2 Bath Record Office acquires material by the following methods:

- Deposit: collections may be held on deposit for organizations or individuals which retain ownership
- Donation: where ownership is passed to Bath Record Office
- Transfer from Bath & North East Somerset Council departments and services
- Purchase.

4.3 The development of the collection may encompass records in any form and include, but are not limited to, manuscripts, topographical prints and drawings, maps, printed and machine-readable texts, images, film, digital records, and all communication media.

4.4 BRO will not usually accept artefacts, objects or major works of art. When offered such material, BRO shall refer depositors to local museums and galleries. In exceptional circumstances, where such artefacts form an integral part of an archive collection, they may be accepted.

4.5 Records are appraised for their evidential, informational and/or cultural significance before being accepted for permanent preservation. All records within collections will be appraised at the time of accessioning and may also be appraised later at the time of cataloguing.

4.6 With the agreement of depositors and donors, those records not deemed worthy of permanent preservation will be confidentially destroyed or returned to the depositor or donor, while any records which do not meet the collections policy criteria, but which are worthy of permanent preservation, may be transferred to a more appropriate repository.

4.7 Periodic reviews are undertaken of the collections to ensure that they contain material that is worthy of permanent preservation in accordance with transfer and depositor agreements. During this process we may consider that records in our custody would be better transferred to the collections of a more relevant repository. We may also decide to remove duplicate items or material not worthy of permanent preservation.

4.8 Depositors of records retain the right to withdraw them subject to the terms & conditions of the deposit agreement.

4.9 In accordance with the Council's records retention schedule, and in conjunction with the Records Manager, regular archival review of records held by the Records Management service of Bath & North East Somerset is undertaken so that relevant Council records are transferred for permanent preservation.

5. COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT

5.1 BRO will continue to develop its collections by:

- Liaising with local museums and archives so that our respective collecting activities are complementary.
- Identifying and consulting with communities who are under-represented as users of, and donors to, the Record Office, in order to raise awareness of archives and to identify potential new collections.
- Building relationships and working in partnership with diverse communities such as BAME groups to support the development of collections which reflect the nature and diversity of local communities within Bath & North East Somerset.
- Identifying gaps in the historic record created by the collections and seeking to fill those gaps where possible.
- Liaising with The National Archives, stakeholders and the Archives South West network to identify and secure significant archive material that may be at risk of dispersal by sale.
- Liaising with creators of Public Records so that we can ensure they are transferred regularly and efficiently.
- Monitoring and purchasing new publications and other relevant materials relating to local and family history, and the special collections to add to the local studies collection at Bath Record Office.
- Researching, developing and sharing strategies and tools to acquire and preserve digital records.
- Taking a proactive approach to acquiring records from within Bath & North East Somerset Council by working closely with Records Management and other Council departments and services, particularly with regards to digital records.
- Working in partnership with a variety of groups and organisations to support projects relating to the history of the area. This will enable us to raise our profile amongst community groups and the education sector, for example, and thereby attracting a wider range of archives and local studies material for deposit.
- The marketing activities of Heritage Services raises awareness of the Record Office and signposts potential depositors to useful information on our collections.

6. STANDARDS AND LEGISLATION

6.1 The following standard apply to this policy:

- for records of local government: Local Government Act 1972, which requires local authorities to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council of any of their officers' (s.224) and Local Government (Records) Act 1962 which empowers local authorities to provide certain archives services (s1.1).

- for the records of courts, coroners, prisons, hospitals and other government bodies: the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967; and the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.
- for manorial records the Manorial Documents Rules 1959 (amended 1963 and 1967).

6.2 Access to all collections complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the Data Protection Act 2018, and Environmental Information Regulations 2005.

6.3 For the Local Studies collection the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to maintain a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service”.

7. REVIEW

7.1 The policy will be reviewed in consultation with interested organisations, stakeholders and individuals every 5 years.

VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Detail
1.0	26/06/2020	Partly succeeds sections of the Heritage Services Collections Development Policy 2013 relevant to Bath Record Office
1.1	09/11/2020	Reworked for Cabinet member approval. Decision made 20/11/2020