



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny

FOR INFORMATION

Committee:	Adult Services
Date:	12 October 2005
Title:	Overview of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies
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Services and Resources

The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies (CBS) is situated at County Hall and was created with the aid of a grant of £463,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is centred upon the former Buckinghamshire Record Office premises at the New County Offices (Tower Block), Aylesbury, and was opened in 2002.

It provides the following services:

the archive service for Buckinghamshire County Council and also for Milton Keynes Council under a joint arrangement since 1997

the county local studies collection (formerly part of the County Reference Library) and since April 2005 the management of local studies libraries within branch libraries

the records management service for Buckinghamshire County Council and since January 2005 the Freedom of Information (FOI) service.

The Centre's annual budget for the current year is £489,000, of which £104,000 is generated income from SLAs for Modern Records and £79,000 is paid by Milton Keynes Council under the joint arrangement.

Staffing as of 1 October 2005:

- 1 x Heritage Manager (County Archivist)
- 1 x Archives and Local Studies Manager (Senior Archivist)
- 3 x Archivists (2.5 FTE)
- 1 x Modern Records Manager/Freedom of Information Officer
- 1 x Local Studies Specialist (based by High Wycombe Library)
- 1 x Local Studies Librarian
- 1 x Archive Conservator
- 1 x Archive Searchroom Supervisor
- 1 x Archive Production Assistant
- 4 x Senior Library Assistants (2.9 FTE)
- 4 x Modern Records Assistants (3.5 FTE)

Total: 19 members of staff (15 FTE)

Two temporary appointments were terminated on 30 September 2005, owing to lack of funds. These were 1 x Archive Production Assistant and 0.5 x Local Studies Librarian.

Premises

The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies is based in the basement of the New County Offices (Tower Block) and has 2 public reading rooms (one for using local studies materials, eg. books, microfilms, electronic resources, the other for original archives), 7 archive strongrooms, which meet the conditions for archive storage in the British Standard 5454: 2000, and 6 storage rooms for County Council modern records. There is also an archive conservation studio. In addition, we manage the Central Registry filing room in the Old County Offices basement and storage in the Judges Lodgings. We also now manage the document storage at Fitzpatrick Highways Depot at Griffin Lane, Aylesbury. There are other local studies libraries at High Wycombe, Buckingham and Chesham Libraries respectively.

Current issues

The Centre, particularly its Modern Records Unit, has taken on the County Council's responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act since January 2005, when the provisions of the Act came fully into force. This has impacted considerably on staff time and a spending pressure of £20,000 for additional staff expenditure has been identified in this year's Medium Term Plan.

The storage space at Griffin Lane, Aylesbury, has been condemned under Health and Safety and Internal Audit inspections as hazardous to health and safety and as providing insecure accommodation for records, many of which are personally sensitive.

In addition, further strongroom and storage space is desperately required for future accruals of archives and County Council modern records.

The Centre is periodically inspected by The National Archives (TNA) under the Public Records Acts, the most recent inspection having taken place in 2003. TNA congratulated the service on the many improvements made as a result of the investment of the Council, assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Features praised in the report include:

- Good access and signage, compliant with Disability Discrimination Act.
- Good level of security both in the strongrooms and in the public areas.
- Additional strongroom space.
- New air-handling system.
- New conservation studio.
- Improved facilities for visitors, including the new local studies room, re-furnished archive searchroom with extra seats, toilets with disabled access, and refreshment room.
- New education room.
- Our 'useful and lively' website.
- Records management service.

Areas identified for further development are:

- Tackling as a priority the cataloguing backlog to make more of our holdings available for public access.

- Provision of additional strongroom space for larger items, such as maps.
- Development of an archival education programme.
- Improvement of facilities for staff, including space for cataloguing.
- Further developments in records management, including electronic records management.

Statistics (for year 2004-05 except where stated otherwise):

Archives and Local Studies services at CBS:

- Users of CBS:
- Users of the Archive Searchroom:
- No. of original archives used in the Archive Searchroom:
- No. of postal enquiries received in CBS:
- No. of e-mail enquiries received in CBS:
- No. of telephone calls received in CBS:
- No. of documents receiving conservation treatment (): [conservator on maternity leave,]

Modern records service at CBS:

- No. of boxes received:
- No. of document retrievals:
- No. of boxes destroyed:
- No. of FOI enquiries received (Jan.-Aug. 2005):