**Appendix 3**

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###### Leicestershire County Council

**Communities and Well Being**

**RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND**

**CARE & CONSERVATION POLICY**

**2023-28**

**RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND**

**CARE & CONSERVATION POLICY 2023-2028**

This policy sits within the Collections Management Framework and should be read in conjunction with the Archive Collections Development Policy (2023-28), Documentation & Cataloguing Policy (2023-28), Archives Access Policy (2023-28), Documentation & Cataloguing Plan, and the Care & Conservation Plan.

1. **Statement of Purpose**

**The purpose of The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland is to allow the three local authorities (Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council) to discharge their legal responsibilities to collect, care for and provide access to records; to safeguard the future of the rich and irreplaceable archival heritage of our area and to provide a high quality accessible, responsive, engaging and sustainable public service.**

This policy has been written in accordance with the Statement of Purpose and the Archive Collections Development Policy. All staff (paid and volunteer) are required to read and agree to the policy. The Care and Conservation Plan sets out the way the policy will be put into action and should be read in conjunction with the Forward Plan, Documentation & Cataloguing Plan, Emergency & Salvage Plan and the Digital Strategy.

1. **Policy Statement**

The Record Office preserves and conserves the significant recorded material relating to the life and history of the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland, and of the City of Leicester. All preservation and conservation work will reflect the best current methods and practice available and carried out with due attention to the needs of the material preserved.

**The purpose of the Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework for:**

* Preservation: preventative and remedial conservation of the collections
* The safe use of and access to the collections
* Assessing, planning and prioritising collections care needs

**2.1 Responsibility**

The Senior Archivist and Collections & Conservation Manager are the lead professionals within the organisation supported by a number of other qualified professionals including the Conservation Officer and Collections and Learning Manager who advise on all matters relating to care and conservation of the collections both at an operational and strategic level.

The Record Office Team has overall responsibility for the day-to-day care of the collections. However maintaining the collections in good condition is the responsibility of everyone who works, volunteers or visits the Record Office to use the collections.

This shared responsibility for vigilance requires a robust reporting system which leads to the Conservation Officer in the first instance and, depending on the nature of the circumstance, may require escalation through the relevant lines of responsibility.

In the case of significant and/or unresolved concerns regarding the care and conservation of collections, where solutions or resources are beyond the scope of responsibility or the devolved resources of the service, these are reported to the Head of Service by the Collections and Learning Manager.

The Record Office trains all staff and volunteers who handle the collections in the course of their work. No untrained personnel are allowed to retrieve and provide access to visitors / service users.

Visitors to the Search rooms will be briefed on how to handle the items they are studying and will be supervised at all times. This is especially important with fragile / vulnerable items.

If any items are to be considered for conservation outside of the service’s provision, the Conservation Officer will check the suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the ICCON Conservation Register will be selected.

Only suitably trained and qualified conservators will carry out interventive treatment on objects.

The service will keep detailed records of all significant treatments carried out on objects both in house and externally.

**2.2 The Collection**

Leicestershire County Council is aware of the risks to the collections from environmental factors, poor handling, packaging and display materials and methods, and of the need to assess, record and improve the condition of the collection. The service cares for the collections in store, in use and whilst on display by developing a Conservation and Collections Care plan, setting requirements, monitoring how we achieve these and taking action to ensure they are maintained.

The details are listed in the Conservation and Collections Care Plan and include:

* monitoring and improving environmental conditions including temperature, relative humidity, light where possible
* monitoring the threat from pests
* housekeeping
* documentation of the condition of the collection and recording treatments
* storage materials and methods
* access and use
* Handling and transport methods
	1. **Preservation and Conservation**

We define preservation and conservation as activities or treatments which are undertaken to a series of relevant standards which stabilise the physical or chemical condition of a document or archive, prolonging its future or improving people’s access to it through both interventive and non-interventive actions.

**2.4 Storage and Environment**

The safety and security of its deposited material is of paramount importance to the Record Office as reflected in this policy and the Archive Collections Development Policy and the Archives Access Policy.

The Record Office strong rooms were constructed in the early 1990s to conform to what was then BS5454. The initial principle of thermal inertia is now supplemented with a controlled and constantly monitored environment which maintains a temperature and relative humidity conforming to current guidelines. The use of the Ellab/Hanwell EMS system provides live environmental data to the Conservation Officer as well as other members of the Conservation & Collections Management Team.

The strong rooms are air chilled and have fans to circulate air; the machinery for which is maintained regularly.

There are no windows which eliminates any solar gain and UV light, as well as any potential security issues.

Storage within the strong rooms includes appropriate shelving for boxes, rolled items, large flat items and non-standard document sizes. The shelving including the mobile racking is now approaching obsolescence.

Where required archival items are stored in protective packaging. The Preservation Assessment survey (2023) is the most condition assessment carried out the archive collections. This survey now has informed the Care & Conservation Plan and will form the baseline for future collection assessment and planning.

The buildings and plant are maintained by the Operational Property (Facilities Management) Team of Leicestershire County Council.

The Record Office’s single out-store is on the County Hall site at Glenfield. This was acquired to meet the need for additional storage space once the strong rooms reached capacity. It was intended to be temporary storage whilst the Council investigated options for the relocation of the ROLLR. The store does not meet archival standards, so the service has had to reflect this in the type of material allocated there.

This out-store is also covered by the Ellab/Hanwell EMS system and benefits from being within the working environment of the wider Collections and Learning Team including the Conservation & Collections Management Team. who can access and check the area on a regular basis.

Good housekeeping is a fundamental basis for collections care and preservation. We consider housekeeping to include keeping collections and other working spaces clean and tidy, regular checking for potential risks such as mould growth and evidence of pests. The Record Office has subcontracted cleaners who clean the public areas and staff office and welfare spaces on a daily basis. The Record Office staff are responsible for maintaining high standards of house keeping in the strong rooms and other collections areas. There is a provision of cleaning equipment kept on site for this purpose.

An integrated pest management system is in place for storage areas. In addition pest control (vermin) at the record office site is managed by a subcontractor of the Operational Property (Facilities Management) Team of Leicestershire County Council.

**2.5 Search rooms**

This Care & Conservation policy, read in conjunction with the Archive Access Policy sets out the basis on which documents are made accessible, upon request and with due diligence of their preservation requirements. In this the preservation of the archival material is the priority. As a last resort, access may be refused if items are too damaged or fragile, though every effort will be made to provide researchers with access through surrogates or assisted access.

Preservation and security of the collections are vital aspects of the provision of public service access in the Record Office search rooms. Researchers in search room two (supervised access to primary sources) are invigilated whilst working with original documents.

Documents in use in the search room are at their most vulnerable and we try to ensure that they are stable enough to be accessed, that any specialist equipment such as book cradles and pillows, page weights and nitrile gloves are provided and the user is instructed about areas of vulnerability, general handling and how to avoid damage.

If there are concerns about providing access or with regard to preservation/conservation issues these are reported to the Conservation Officer.

**2.6 Conservation Management**

The Record Office maintains a fully equipped conservation studio with a full time, Conservation Officer who is part of the Conservation & Collections Management Team, managed by the Collections & Conservation Manager. The Conservation Officer will be a qualified person accredited by ICON [Institute of Conservation] or the ARA [Archives and Records Association] and administered by those professional bodies and allowed to use ACR [Accredited Conservator-Restorer] after their name.

Preservation is at the heart of the archival process from acquisition to access and as such is regarded as a responsibility of everyone in the organisation.

The Conservation Officer works with colleagues and volunteers to conserve and preserve the collections. As such the Conservation Officer carries out remedial conservation, monitors the environment and advises on all matters of preservation. This is reflected in the Care & Conservation plan.

Following the recent Preservation Assessment Survey the Care & Conservation Plan will focus on targeted and achievable improvements. This targeted approach will feed into plans for the proposed Archives, Collections & Learning Centre.

There are two dedicated budgets for archive conservation; one managed by the Senior Archivist and one held within the wider Collections Management & Care Team.

**2.7 Assessment of new material**

All newly accessioned archive material is subject to assessment by the Conservation Officer. Any archive or collection which is assessed by an Archivist off site and before accessioning should also be assessed by the Conservation Officer if it is determined that there is a significant preservation concern. This ensures that any necessary treatment or remedial work can be planned for and carried out to limit the risk of further deterioration or transfer of risk to existing collections.

**2.8 Treatment**

All conservation treatments conform to current accepted conservation and archival practice. As such, they are minimal in extent and appropriately sympathetic to the material being conserved and respect the integrity of the historical document. Repairs are left deliberately detectable but not obtrusive. Treatments do not obscure written text, nor is missing text or images 'filled in' even if known. Old, inappropriate repairs may be removed or rectified if they are causing harm and if their effect obscures text.

All new conservation work is reversible. All conservation materials and procedures meet current archival standards and are carried out by qualified professional conservators.

**2.9 Documentation of Treatments**

Significant or specialist conservation work are documented in line with Documentation & Cataloguing policy. Historic records of conservation work, held on ‘work cards’ dating back to the 1950s, have been preserved and are being added retrospectively to the CALM system, to provide a single, coherent, searchable database of all conservation work and treatments.

**2.10 Creation and use of surrogates**

Where public access is likely to cause either an unsustainable draw on our resources or impact on the preservation of our collections alternative means of access will be considered and provided where possible.

The Record Office recognizes that customers want and need to see original documents which are both exciting to use and important evidentially. We do not believe that the use of surrogates should completely replace access to originals, which is the fundamental purpose of Record Office collecting, reservation and access.

However, where records receive heavy use, or are fragile, the creation of surrogate copies to maintain or facilitate wider access will be used. The final decision to create surrogates or insist upon their use in preference to the original rests with the archivist and the Conservation Officer.

All staff are expected to take an active part in making recommendations on use of surrogate copies.

Mass digitisation and the use of online platforms as a means of widening access are also actively used and promoted, in part because of their role in preservation. The Record Office is an active partner in several digitisation projects and it is expected that the creation and use of online digital surrogates will grow considerably in the future.

**2.11 Copying**

Provision of photocopies is subject to the Record Office’s *Photocopying and Reprographics Procedures*, which have been prepared with the advice of the Conservation Officer. Digital photography is allowed in the search room by the public using daily or weekly permits and is overseen by search room staff. The Conservation Officer should be consulted in preservation matters relating to handling issues in the search room.

**2.12 Exhibitions and loans**

Loans of original archival material are covered in the Record Office Loans Policy (2023-2028) and always subject to careful consideration of circumstances – venue, security, legal implications, insurance and travelling arrangements.

Records are assessed by the Conservation Officer for suitability for loan and transit. Conservation work may be undertaken prior to any loan and archive material will be lent with a series of requirements (such as specialist supports, packaging etc.) and the necessary documentation. Facilities Reports, where appropriate, will be requested to assess the suitability of a borrower/venue. Transport of records must be secure, and any handling requirements discussed in advance.

**3. Security**

Security is a principal consideration of the Office, and it takes its responsibilities for the security of staff, collection, information and data seriously.

**3.1 The Building**

The building fronts onto a busy commercial street in a populated area and the rear of the building is surrounded by high walls, metal fences and padlocked gates.

There is CCTV on the outside of the building and in the public search rooms and reception.

There are a limited number of building key-holders and key allocation is managed by the Conservation Officer.

The building is alarmed, and this is monitored 24 hours by an external contractor of the LCC Operational Property Department who also provide the first response/call-out service. The Premises Officer (LCC Corporate Facilities Team) is responsible for Monday – Friday unlocking and locking procedures. When the Office is open on Saturdays the supervising Archivist carries out these duties supported by the duty Archive Assistants.

The ROLLR has zoned elements of security ranging from

* Free public access (Reception, exhibition space and shop)
* Controlled public access (Search Rooms and meeting/education Room)
* Invigilated spaces (Search Rooms)
* Accompanied access (staff offices and conservation workshop)
* High Security/No public access (Strongrooms)

A managed door access system controls public access into the searchrooms and personal door fobs allow staff to move through security doors into secure parts of the building.

The Strongroom must be physically unlocked and locked at the start and end of every day and staff access during working hours is controlled by electronic fobs.

**3.2 Service Users**

Access to the Searchrooms is controlled by the ARA Archives Card or by the presentation of suitable forms of identification in order to be issued with a reader’s ticket.

ROLLR Guidance for use of the searchrooms has recently been updated and personal belongings and equipment are strictly controlled.

Personal belongings which are not allowed in the searchrooms are stored in secure public lockers and equipment carried into the searchrooms must be placed in a transparent bag.

**3.3 Collections**

Collections security is paramount; Wherever possible collections are stored in the secure strongrooms; however these are now at capacity and collections (mostly Local Studies material) is now stored in areas of the building which are in the security-controlled areas but are not suitable for long term preservation of archives. The off-site storage facility at Glenfield (County Hall) is secure within a building that has similar security provision manged by the LCC Operational Property Department.

The ROLLR has strict location control on collections with home locations managed on a locations database and movement from these home locations managed using the service’s Document Request Slip.

If the ROLLR receives a request for an outward loan, then the security of the venue is assessed using the UK Registrars Standard Facilities Report (see ROLLR Loans Policy 2023-28)

Security in transit is managed with in-house procedures and collections are never left unattended in vehicles. The service has specialist in transit insurance as part of its requirements with LCC Corporate Insurance Teams (Internal Audit)

**4. Emergency planning and Salvage**

The Record Office has robust plans in place to mitigate risk where possible and to act swiftly and efficiently in the event of an emergency. These plans and guidance documents form part of the wider Service’s Emergency Planning and Salvage Guidance. The Record Office has its own business continuity plan which is administered corporately and stored on an external server to prevent loss should the Authority suffer a cyber-attack.

In addition standard Fire Risk assessments and other mitigating health and safety procedures which are designed to reduce risk.

The Record Office benefits from being able to work in conjunction with colleagues in Museum Collections, Creative Learning Services and the Heritage team enabling a larger pool of resources to be formed and the provision of skilled/informed assistance should an emergency lead to a salvage operation.

The Record Office, and wider service within Collections & Learning, are ‘Priority Users’ and therefore can call upon the assistance of Harwell Restoration in an emergency. <https://www.harwellrestoration.co.uk/priority-user-service/priority-user-benefits>

**5. Training**

This is maintained through Continuing Professional Development and identified through the staff Annual Performance Review (APR). Conservation staff will receive support for training in appropriate areas to keep up to date with new techniques, processes, material etc. as resources become available.

Relevant training and refresher sessions are given to all staff, and volunteers in handling and packaging of records.

The Conservation Officer is heavily involved in the planning of the annual closure for stock taking for one week during the autumn which enables important but time-consuming, or labour intensive, work to be done on the maintenance of collections.

In order to maintain safe working practices at all times and to minimise risk to collections at all times museum objects and archives:

All Service staff concerned with moving or transporting collections will receive appropriate training in handling techniques and the conservation requirements of different categories of collections.

All staff will be fully trained on the Health and Safety implications of their work areas and the materials and processes they use to ensure that Health and Safety at Work, COSSH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Heath) and other specified regulations are fully complied with.

All staff new to the Service will receive basic Health and Safety training as part of their induction programme.

Training opportunities will be made available to staff throughout the Service to develop an understanding of the basic requirements of collection management

**6. Best current methods and practice:**

With the emergence of new techniques, products, and materials it is vital that conservation and preservation work is subject to constant review to ensure that correct techniques are applied and that alternatives may be considered where appropriate in the future.

The service will support corporate memberships of a range of conservation organisations and professional bodies to ensure current literature is available within the Service.

The Conservation Officer and the Conservation and Collections Manager must be supported to keep up to date with recent and emerging best practice in archive and other collections care.

1. **Review of this policy**

Established February 2010

Reviewed and Revised 2014

Reviewed and Revised 2018

Reviewed and revised 2021

Reviewed and Renewed 2023

The Policy will be reviewed every year.

This policy will be renewed every five years

**Date of Review 2024**

**Date of Final Review and Renewal 2028**

**Further Information**

**Key Standards:**

* BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections
* BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections
* ICON Code of conduct 2014
* ICON Professional standards 2014
* *Benchmarks for collections care for museums, libraries and archives*, MLA 2002- a self-certification checklist tool.
* <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/benchmarks-in-collections-care-resources>
* *Preservation Assessment Survey* [PAS] <http://www.libraryarchivesurveys.org.uk/>