

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 22 January 2025  
**Report of:** Head of Planning & Regulatory Services  
**Title of Report:** Archive Scanning Project

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To approve the release of £999,500 from the Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund to complete Phases 1 and 2 of the proposed Archive Scanning Project
<b>Key decision:</b>	Not Key
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Nigel Chapman: Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A well-run Council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2024-28
<b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:</b>	
1.	<b>Approve</b> the request for the release of £999,500 from the Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund to complete Phases 1 and 2 of the proposed Archive Scanning project.
2.	<b>Delegate</b> to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with Councillor Chapman [Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies], the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Governance the authority to enter into any contracts necessary to undertake the project where they do not already have authority within the constitution

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Gantt chart showing indicative project delivery programme
Appendix 2	Project Risk Register
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Introduction and background**

1. The Council has a long-standing requirement to rationalise the space usage in the Town Hall, thereby giving the Council greater flexibility and opportunity to use its space as efficiently and effectively as possible.
2. A Town Hall Works (Lot 2) Fund was identified in the 23/24 Budget, and this report seeks to draw down £999,500 from this for the purposes of the Archive Scanning project.

## **Current Situation**

3. A significant proportion of the Town Hall Basement is taken up with paper file storage, predominantly planning files, with a large number of files also stored in the Town Hall Flat. In total, it is estimated we have the equivalent of 6500 archive boxes of files stored and, in most cases, there is need to retain these files for officers or members of the public to view upon request. However, this could be achieved by viewing digitally as opposed to in the original paper format.
4. Very few new paper files are now added to those stored in the Town Hall Basement or Flat as the Council has moved to full digitisation, and so once the archive is scanned, there should be no need to re-engage in this exercise.
5. A recent Fire Risk Assessment has indicated that some of the file storage is a risk that needs to be resolved, and clearly the removal and scanning of paper files would remove this risk. This has expedited the necessity to free up this space as part of the wider Town Hall project. It should be noted that we have strict access controls in place and an evacuation plan to ensure staff can be evacuated in the event of a fire.

## **Proposal**

6. The scanning project is split into two main phases:
  - Phase 1 – Create a catalogue of all documents
  - Phase 2 – Scan and embed digitised documents into Council’s digital filing systems.
7. Phase 1 will require Council officers to ensure that all documents are retained under the relevant Retention Policies, disposing of any unnecessary documents confidentially. In doing so, the quantum of scanning required as part of Phase 2 will be reduced.
8. Due to the quantum of files that will require handling, temporary resource is required to deliver Phase 1, including a project manager resource and staff to handle the cataloguing itself. Extrapolating the average time to handle a file across the number of files that need examining and cataloguing, the estimated cost of this is total £267,000. This sum includes a 30% contingency to recognise that some complexities may emerge as the project progresses.
9. Phase 2 will require the procurement of a third-party supplier to remove and scan our catalogue of documents. Whilst the cost of this will be subject to a full procurement process, the cost of this is estimated to be £732,500. This sum is based on estimates received from third-party suppliers. These estimates assume no reduction in the volume of files through Phase 1. This acts as a contingency as we believe Phase 1 will lead to the reduction of volume of files, reducing the

actual costs of Phase 2. This estimated cost includes an internal project manager resource for Phase 2.

10. An indicative project delivery Gantt chart is included in Appendix 1
11. Although not within the scope of the Archive Scanning project, the Council also houses the 'City Archive' a historic collection jointly funded with Oxfordshire County Council. Officers will ensure liaison with the Archivist, who oversees the City Archive, to retain notable documents where possible.
12. Once the scanning is completed, the digitised files will be embedded into the relevant Service's systems. There is a legal requirement to keep a very small amount of original documents even after digitisation and these will be returned to us for storage.
13. Once quality checks have established our documents have been accurately digitised, the original documents will be confidentially destroyed.
14. A Project Board with representation from ICT, Finance and Change Teams will ensure that digitised files are successfully integrated into relevant Services' and Council-wide digital storage system. Once a catalogue of files has been created and the type and volume of files to be scanned is confirmed, the board will agree a detailed strategy, coordinated with any planned changes to digital filing systems. Key issues will be reported up to the Organisational Change Board.

### **Other options**

15. The Council could choose to procure a third-party supplier to deliver Phase 1; creating a catalogue of all documents on the Council's behalf. The advantage of this option would be the immediate removal of all files in order for the cataloguing to take place. However, in doing so the Council would miss the opportunity to filter the documents before being scanned, thereby inflating the cost of Phase 2, whilst also rendering file retrieval very complicated for the duration of the Phase. Furthermore, the indicative cost of procuring this service is broadly similar to the cost of delivering the Phase in-house. Therefore, this option is not recommended.
16. The Council could choose to not proceed with the project. However, this would be contrary to the recommendations of the recent Fire Risk Assessment and remove an opportunity to deliver additional space either for its own operations or to drive value and revenue. Therefore, this option is not recommended.

### **Financial Implications**

17. This report seeks to draw down £999,500 from the Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund for the purposes of the Archive Scanning Project.
18. The Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund (capital code B0157) was identified in the 23/24 Budget to support essential works to the Town Hall. There is £8,000,000 allocated in the capital programme over the next four years and a further £2,000,000 in the capital pipeline. Of the £8,000,000 in the capital programme, there is currently an approved budget of £3,171,915. This budget includes £150,000 that was previously allocated to support the scanning of planning files. There are several

other major projects which will seek cabinet approval to draw down from The Town Hall Works (Lot 2) fund over the next four years. These include façade cleaning, Re-roofing and further ceiling repair works. Along with the Archive Scanning Project, these are all considered to be urgent and cost-avoidance projects.

19. In accordance with the indicative project delivery Gantt chart included in Appendix 1, the majority of the costs for the project are estimated to be drawn down in the 25/26 Financial Year.

### **Legal issues**

20. Many of the different document types stored in the Town Hall Basement and Flat are subject to legislation determining how long they need to be retained for.
21. To comply with GDPR legislation, the Council must ensure it doesn't retain personal data for longer than needed for the purpose for which is collected.
22. The Council has a Records Retention Schedule which compiles different document types across all Service Areas and their legal retention periods. An update to this is being compiled by the Information Governance Team in January 2025. The Records Retention Schedule will provide key guidance to the Cataloguing process in Phase 1, enabling the considered disposal of documents that don't need to be retained, reducing third-party scanning costs in Phase 2.
23. Any third-party suppliers delivering Phase 2 of the project will be selected through a competitive procurement process and the Council will ensure compliance with national procurement legislation and its internal contract policies.
24. Any temporary staff hired to carry out Phase 1 of the project must abide by the Council's policies on information governance, particularly on confidentiality and data protection, and will sign any agreements and undertake any necessary mandatory corporate training if required to do so

### **Level of risk**

25. A risk assessment has been undertaken, and the risk register is attached (Appendix 2).

### **Equalities impact**

26. Please refer to Equalities Impact Report (Appendix 3)

### **Conclusion**

27. Cabinet is asked to review and approve the recommendation set out above.

<b>Report author</b>	Nathan Breeze
Regeneration Manager Regeneration & Economy 01865 529219 / 07483 010164 nbreeze@oxford.gov.uk	

<b>Background Papers:</b> None
--------------------------------

This page is intentionally left blank