

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION  
SELECT COMMITTEE  
4 JULY 2001**

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NOTE: A copy of the report mentioned below has been sent to all members of the Community Information and Protection Select Committee and other members who have requested it. Further copies are available from Nikki Patient, Room 222, County Secretary's Department, County Hall, Hertford.  
(Telephone: 01992 555560)

**HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES AND LOCAL STUDIES (HALS)  
ACCOMMODATION**

The Select Committee considered a report outlining the issues currently facing Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS) in relation to the provision and standard of its accommodation. The Public Record Office (PRO) inspection in 1999 identified that HALS' accommodation and storage facilities were inadequate in terms of both space and conditions. The PRO advised that problems were likely to result in the loss of HALS' designation as a place of deposit for public records, unless rectified and improved before the next PRO inspection in 2004. The Historical Manuscripts Commission, which is responsible for manorial and tithe records, have expressed the same concerns as the PRO and would also take measures to remove records if the County Council do not act on their recommendations.

Members discussed the report and made a number of comments. These included:

- (i) deep concern about the possibility of HALS losing its status as a place of public deposit
- (ii) concern about the physical threat to records from factors such as corrosion, humidity, insufficient security, fire, flood and vandalism
- (iii) that problems should be addressed with urgency considering the time since the PRO report in 1999 and the timescale in which to rectify the problems
- (iv) that officers should look at cost effective interim solutions where they are appropriate, such as strengthening outside doors and minimising risk from leaks and fires
- (v) that any options for alternative accommodation should be centrally located and easily accessible.

The Committee reached the following conclusions:

- (a) That the Executive Member for Community Information and Development should draw the attention of Cabinet formally to the HALS situation and the need to rectify existing problems prior to 2004.
- (b) That the Directors of Community Information and People and Property obtain costing for a range of solutions and develop robust business cases for these, and that these options should include consideration of location regarding accessibility by public transport or private vehicles.

[Current situation:

- (i) WS Atkins Ltd, a company with considerable experience of building archive repositories, have been commissioned to conduct a feasibility study into the needs and options for HALS. Their report includes a detailed specification together with costed options. They will present their report at a members' seminar on 20 December, after which a visit will be made to the new Essex Record Office in Chelmsford; all members are invited.
- (ii) Community Information has committed £10,000 in the 2001/2 budget to cover cost effective interim measures addressing some of HALS accommodation problems.]

**Keith Emsall**  
**Chairman**  
**County Hall**  
**Hertford**

**4 July 2001**