

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 7 February 2019

Predicted Performance Outturn 2018-2019

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Committee note the predicted performance outturn for the service.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Background

2. The Joint Archive Service has worked to a three year planning cycle since its inception in 1997. The scope of the seventh plan was extended to ten years as it will transform the service and will take more than three years to deliver some of these changes. The ten-year Plan was reviewed and updated in 2018 and approved by the Joint Archive Committee on 3 April 2018.

3. The Forward Plan and Annual Service Delivery Plan covers the Joint Archive Service and the Museum Service for the County Council. Together the services are known as 'Archives and Heritage'.

4. A summary of progress for 2018-2019 is given below with a fuller report on each element of the plan at Appendix 2. Progress since September 2018 has been affected by the unsuccessful outcome of the Heritage Lottery Fund Round 2 bid for £3.9m funding for the Staffordshire History Centre project. The Project Board and staff Project Team have been reviewing plans to identify alternative methods of delivery for some parts of the project.

Developing an Active Partnership approach

5. The partnership between the Archives and Heritage Service and William Salt Library Trust is continuing as it assesses alternative proposals for the Staffordshire History Centre project (SHC). Stakeholder meetings have paused pending a decision on an appropriate way forward for the project.

6. Preparatory work was completed to establish a Development Trust to continue fundraising for the SHC after the HLF funding had ceased. This was approved in principle by both the Joint Archive Committee and William Salt Library Trust. Implementation of the new trust has been deferred since the outcome of the Round Two bid.

7. Work to develop new partnerships and specialist interest groups has continued very successfully. Three university partner projects have been delivered (or are ongoing) and an oral history project was completed in Stoke with a heritage society.

8. Volunteers have continued to be recruited to support the delivery of two externally funded projects and the new Lichfield History Access Point. So far eleven volunteers have been recruited at Lichfield.

9. The service participated in a national survey of visitors to British archive services, but the full results have not been received. The number of volunteer hours is estimated to be around 5,200 for the end of March. This is lower than anticipated due to the Staffordshire History Centre project not progressing.

Resilience and sustainability

10. The service successfully raised £832,000 of matched and partnership funding for the SHC project. This was the full amount required for the delivery of the project. The Project Board and staff Project Team are considering alternative proposals to ensure this funding is not lost. The matched funding included two projects funded by Wellcome Trust and Archives Revealed and these projects are now being implemented. The Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service also successfully raised £18,000 to digitise Staffordshire Tithe maps and this project is also being taken forward.

11. The Service opened up access to the Lichfield Collections through Staffordshire Record Office in May 2018. This resulted in an increase in requests for documents from the Stafford Archive Outstore which have been managed through advance orders. The Museum completed its move from the Shugborough Estate in December 2018.

12. On top of work for the development phase of the SHC project the service also continued its annual work programme focussed on collections. This includes the conservation programme, cataloguing new collections and improving descriptions of existing collections. The Doulton Described project to catalogue more records from the Minton Archive continued supported by funding from a National Archives Cataloguing Grant.

13. In January a new model for exhibitions at Staffordshire Record Office was trialled with Museum objects on display in the Reading Room. In March this will be extended to provide a bigger area and include archives.

Reaching and engaging new audiences

14. The majority of work in this area was focussed on completing the extensive Activity Plan for the SHC project. Projects within this plan are now being identified as smaller funding bid proposals. Branding for the SHC was developed and this will be used by the Service to support new events and offers that deliver the vision for the project.

15. Following a successful piloting in 2017 the service continued to attend community events, fetes and history fairs. Approximately 700 people visited the service stalls at 14 events. Forty-four talks have been delivered by the service so far.

16. Learning activities have been provided through the Staffordshire History Day and two partnership study days. The service has continued supporting school, university and college placements.

17. Delivery of a more formal learning programme is entirely dependent on external funding to establish it.

Sharing knowledge across the sector

18. The Archive and Heritage Service contributes to the wider sector working with a number of different organisations. It is an active member of Archives West Midlands with two county council staff as trustees including Chair of AWM. This year the work has focused on a regional Digital Preservation project. The head of service represented the network at a digital learning set during the year. A case study is due to be published on The National Archives website.

19. Work was completed to scope implementation of a Staffordshire History Centre Network. A total of 51 groups and organisations agreed to support the project in some way. This is being reconsidered as a separate funding bid.

20. Partners, users and volunteers continue to contribute to project blogs such as one developed for the Pauper Vouchers project.

21. The service continues to work closely with local history groups and museums to share knowledge and support work in local communities.

Online presence and remote access

22. Work was complete to develop a Digital Plan has been focussed on digitisation priorities and development of a website to make access easier for users. This work is being reviewed to identify projects suitable for alternative funding bids.

23. Online content has increased with the addition of three new name indexes to the Staffordshire Name Indexes site and addition of 2,787 images to Staffordshire Past Track website. The final phase of peculiar wills and marriage bonds have been published by Find My Past. Visits to online content remain high at 1,241,003 to date.

24. Work on digital preservation has progressed significantly due to participation in the Archives West Midlands regional project. This has been funded by The National Archives Sustainability Fund. The service has reviewed its Digital Preservation Policy and is investigating joining a consortium to procure a system at lower cost.

25. Digital access to Lichfield collections has been provided by the successful launch of the History Access Point in December 2018.

Conclusion and the year ahead

26. It has been a difficult year for the service with focus on the SHC project resulting in an unsuccessful outcome in September 2018. However the service was extremely successful in raising all of the required matched funding. It also completed all of the required plans and hosted a successful site visit for HLF.

27. Whilst the SHC bid might not have been successful the work produced in the development phase is being reviewed and alternative proposals are being developed. The service has been able to take two externally funded projects forward and with the help of its Friends organisation is able to digitise an important collection of maps.

28. A big achievement for the service was completing its collection moves, making them available again and launching the new History Access Point in Lichfield Library. This is a new model of delivery for the service which will be volunteered delivered.

29. The year ahead will focus on agreeing a way forward for the SHC project and delivering parts of it in a different way. The service will also move forward on remodelling its structure as part of its vision and to deliver MTFS savings.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The service plan includes initiatives to widen access to a wider range of users.

Legal implications:

The work of the Archive Service is governed by the Joint Agreement and other legislation to enable both authorities to meet their legal obligations.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The Archive Service has delivered its work within existing resources and utilised grant funding to help improve access to collections.

Risk implications:

The failure of the SHC round 2 bid has highlighted risks around future storage and sustainability of the service. This being addressed by looking at alternative proposals.

Climate Change implications:

The work of the service balances online access and physical access to services and collections to offer options for remote use and not necessarily travel to multiple locations.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

The service offers opportunities for volunteers to get involved and add value to the service with support and accredited training programmes from staff. Volunteering provides many social benefits for individuals which can impact positively on health.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
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Appendix 2: Summary of Predicted Performance Outturn 2019