

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 7 February 2019**

Present: Mike Davies (Invitee/Observer), Gill Heath, Anthony Munday and
Gill Burnett

PART ONE

65. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

66. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

67. Order of Business

RESOLVED – That the order of business on the Agenda be varied and that Item No. 5, “Predicted Performance Outturn 2018/19” be now considered.

68. Predicted Performance Outturn 2018/19

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) detailing the predicted performance outturn for 2018/19 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The Service Plan set out annual targets for the Joint Archive Service and Museum Service for the County Council. Performance against these targets contributed towards achievement of the overall objectives contained in the Services’ ten year Forward Plan 2015-2025, which had been reviewed and updated in 2018.

With regard to Objective 1 - “Developing an Active Partnership Approach”, the joint working which had been established between the Archive and Heritage Service and William Salt Library was continuing with the assessment of alternative proposals for the Staffordshire History Centre (SHC). However, stakeholder meetings had been paused pending a decision on an appropriate way forward for the Project.

Preparatory work to establish a Development Trust to continue fundraising for the SHC project after funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund had ceased, had been completed. Whilst a SHC Charitable Trust had not been established pending a decision on the Stage Two bid, the development of new partnerships and special interest groups had been very successful in delivering three elements of the Project.

Volunteers had continued to be recruited in support of the delivery of two externally funded projects and new Lichfield History Access point. Volunteer hours to the end of March 2019 were estimated to amount to approximately 5,200.

In addition, the service had also participated in a national survey of visitors to British archive services.

With regard to Objective 2 – “Resilience and Sustainability”, the service had raised £832,000 match funding for the SHC Project which represented the full amount required for its delivery. As a result, three elements of the Project were being implemented and the Project Team were considering alternative proposals to ensure the remaining funding could be retained.

From May 2018 various collections formerly held at Lichfield record Office were now available from the Staffordshire Record Office which had generated an increase in requests for documents from the new Stafford Archive Outstore. Also, the Staffordshire County Museum had completed their move from the Shugborough Estate to new stores in the Stafford area. A decision regarding an exhibition space for the museum would be taken when the future of the Staffordshire History Centre (SHC) Project was known. The collections are in their long-term location the issue is around an exhibition space.

The Service had continued with their annual work programme which focussed on conservation, cataloguing and improving descriptions of collections. The ‘Doulton Described’ project which involved cataloguing records from the Minton Archive was continuing with support from the National Archives Cataloguing Grant.

A new model for exhibitions at the Staffordshire Record Office had been trialled during January 2019 with Museum objects being placed on display in the Reading Room. It was intended to extend this model by providing a larger exhibition area so that archive material could be included from in March 2019.

With regard to objective 3 – “Reaching and Engaging New Audiences”, work in this area had focused on completing the Activity Plan for the SHC project. Suitable initiatives included within the Plan were now being identified as smaller funding bid proposals. In addition branding, which had been developed for the SHC project, was to be used by the Service to support new events and offers which aligned with its vision.

Following a successful pilot in 2017, the Service continued to attend community events, fetes and history fairs etc. During the period approximately 700 people had visited stalls at 14 separate events and 44 talks had been given by staff. In addition, various learning activities had been provided in support of Staffordshire History Day together with two Partnership Study Days.

With regard to objective 4 – “Online Presence and Remote Access”, work to develop a Digital Plan which identified digitisation priorities had been completed together with the development of a website to make access easier for users. Online content had increased with the addition of new name indexes to the Staffordshire Name Indexes site and 2,787 new images had been added to the Staffordshire Past Track website. The final phase of the Peculiar Wills and Marriage Bonds project had been published by the Find My Past website and visits to online content remained high at 1,241,003.

In addition, work on digital preservation had progressed significantly owing to participation in the Archives Sustainability Fund. The service were reviewing their Digital Preservation Policy and investigating the possibility of joining a consortium to procure an

alternative system at lower cost than the existing. Also, digital access to Lichfield collections was now available following the launch of the History Access Point in December 2018.

Members noted that it had been a difficult year for the service owing to the unsuccessful SHC Project Stage Two bid. However, notwithstanding this disappointment, considerable success had been achieved in raising all the required match funding, completing Plans on-time and hosting a visit by representatives of the Heritage Lottery Fund. In addition, work produced in the development phase of the project was being reviewed with a view to developing alternative proposals.

A major achievement for the service during the year had been the launch of the new History Access Point in Lichfield Library.

During the year ahead, the focus was to be on agreeing a way forward for the SHC Project and delivering various elements using alternative methods. In addition, the service was to move forward on remodelling its staffing structure with a view to achieving its vision and delivering the savings identified on Partners' Medium Term Financial Strategies.

During the discussion which ensued the Chairman again expressed his disappointment regarding the outcome of the SHC Project Stage Two funding bid. However, he was confident that various elements of the Project could be completed and paid tribute to the work of all the staff involved. He also commented on the importance of the service retaining their Archive accreditation during 2019/20.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

69. Review of Joint Agreement

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) regarding changes which had been made to the Joint Agreement for Archive Services following their decision at the previous meeting of the Committee.

A copy of the updated Agreement was appended to the report for Members' information.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the changes made to the Joint Agreement for Archive Services following the decision of the Committee at their previous meeting, be noted.

70. Predicted Outturn 2018/19 and 2019/20 Revenue Budget

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) giving details of the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2018/19 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

Members noted that a spend of £847,417 was predicted against an approved budget of £864,070 which resulted in an overall estimated underspend of £16,653. This underspend was to be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. Net spend forecasts indicated that managed vacancy savings on staff and training totalling £30,815 were offsetting small overspends on transport and supplies and services totalling £8,057 together with an anticipated under-recovery of income amounting to £6,105.

With regard to the General Reserve, the current balance was £259,018 (which included £153,078 New Burdens Grant funding for investment in new archive storage capacity). However, the Directors highlighted that the City Council were seeking authorisation to spend up to £30,000 from the General Reserve to enable suitable environmental controls to be installed in a new storage area at the City Central Library. This was to ensure the facility met Archive Accreditation standards.

They also noted that the balance in the Archive Acquisition reserve was £57,542.

With regard to the net Revenue Budget, following the change to the budget setting methodology, the proposed net Revenue Budget for 2019/20 was £632,660 (made up of £438,660 from the County Council and £194,000 from the City Council) which represented a reduction of £231,410 over the previous year's total.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That Stoke-on-Trent City Council be authorised to spend £30,000 from the General Reserve for the purpose set out above.

(c) That the 2019/20 net revenue budget as set out in the report be approved.

71. Review of Digital Preservation Policy

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) regarding the outcome of a review of the Digital Preservation Policy which had recently been undertaken.

The Archive Service had developed their first Digital Preservation Policy in 2007 and a review had been undertaken in 2013 in preparation for the Archive Service's Accreditation assessment. Feedback from the assessment had included comments regarding the size of 'born digital' holdings, which were said to be 'very small'. In addition, whilst relations between Council officers and the Records Management and Information Governance Teams were good, the transfer of born digital content from Councils to archives remained 'underdeveloped'. The new policy therefore aimed to address this feedback and ensure digital preservation continued to develop within the Service.

The Archives Service were a member of Archives West Midlands (AWM), a regional strategic partnership, which sought to maximise the benefits of joint working in this area. AWM had recently delivered two projects aimed at supporting Members to develop digital preservation. One of these projects had involved the development of a Digital Preservation Policy and Guidance templates which would be used to inform the Service's policy.

The 2018 review of the Archive Service Accreditation standard had included more ambitious requirements for the preservation of digital archives and the need to self assess against the National Stewardship Digital Alliance (NSDA) levels of digital preservation. AWM had also pledged to support their Members achieve Level One of this standard.

Self-assessment against the NSDA Level One elements had revealed that the Service had passed five; failed one and a further three were incomplete. This meant that the Service were not currently compliant. Therefore, the following key actions had been identified to enable the Service achieve the required standard:-

- An immediate full audit of all media and digital holdings across the whole service;
- A review of the Terms of Deposit;
- Train staff in the use of tools to generate checksums to detect errors in deposited material;
- Trial archiving signed Authority minutes in digital format;
- Continue the good progress made between 2009 and 2011 in implementing digital archiving;
- Procure a stand-alone digital preservation system to enable consistent secure access to digital collections.

With regard to procurement of the required Digital Preservation System, AWM had tested the Archivemata open source and Preservica commercially available systems, both of which had the ability to process and store digital archives securely. Consultation with Staffordshire ICT had suggested that the Preservica system was preferable owing to an absence of staffing resources necessary to customise the Archivemata system.

An opportunity had arisen for the Service to join a Local Authority consortium, headed by Dorset County Council, to acquire the Preservica system at a cost of £4,769 per annum per authority. West Sussex County Council, Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council were also members and a further three Authorities were due to join in April 2019.

During the discussion which ensued Members expressed their support for the proposed revisions to the Digital Preservation Policy and development of the Service's digital storage capacity as a means of achieving additional financial savings.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the revised Digital Preservation Policy be approved.

(c) That a business case to identify funding for the procurement of a Digital Preservation System be developed.

(d) That the Joint Archive Service join the Dorset led Local Authority Digital Preservation Consortium for the procurement of the Perservica Digital Preservation System.

72. Date of next meeting - Thursday 13 June 2019 at 2.30 pm, St Mary's Centre, Lichfield

The Chairman informed them that he had decided not to stand in the elections to Stoke-on-Trent City Council in May 2019 and therefore this was to be his last meeting as the Authority's representative. The Committee then thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Archive service and wished him well for the future.

RESOLVED – That a further meeting of the Committee be held on Thursday 13 June 2019 at 2.30 pm, St Mary's Centre, Lichfield.

73. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972, indicated below.”

PART TWO

74. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2018

The exempt minutes were confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

75. Staffordshire History Centre Project

The Committee noted an exempt joint oral report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on the future of the Staffordshire History Centre Project.

Chairman