

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 13 June 2019**

Present: Gill Heath, Gill Burnett and Lorraine Beardmore

Apologies for absence: Mike Davies

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED – (a) That Mrs. G. Heath be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in June 2020.

(b) That Mrs. L. Beardmore be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in 2020.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Joint Archives Services: Annual Report 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) giving details of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archives Service: Annual Report 2018/19 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes) which had been produced in accordance with the Joint Agreement between the two Authorities.

The Annual report provided an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

This was the first year of the new three-year planning cycle. Notable achievements towards meeting the strategic objectives in the current Forward Plan 2019-2022 included:- (i) opening of the new Lichfield History Centre access point in December 2018; (ii) completion of the Doulton Described project to catalogue the Royal Doulton archive collection; (iii) conclusion of the First World War centennial commemorations including digitization of the Jake Whitehouse Collection; (iv) participation in the Archives West Midlands regional project to acquire the Preservica secure digitisation system; (v) securing funding for the County Asylums project from the Wellcome Trust; (vi) securing funding for the Bawdy Courts project from Archives Revealed; (vii) maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and (viii) sustaining attendance levels at events, talks and group visits.

However, the major cause of disappointment during the year had been the unsuccessful Phase 2 Heritage Lottery Bid for the Staffordshire History Centre.

With regard to the Risk Register, this had been reviewed following a recommendation by the County Council's Internal Audit Team in May 2018. Whilst the highest risk had previously been associated with "Damage/loss of Digital Archives", the acquisition of the Preservica digital preservation system had reduced associated risk rating from 20 to 15. Furthermore, of the 15 entries in the Register, only four had been given a rating of 15 (Medium) ie: (i) "Theft of/Damage to Archives while in Public Use"; (ii) "Damage/Loss of Digital Archives; (iii) "Potential Sale of Collections by Owners"; (iv) "Risk of Inability to Transform Service, Build New Storage and Access Facilities for the Archive Service". The other register entries had all been rated as low.

The Archive Service had first introduced a Service Charter in 1998 as part of their work to meet the Chartermark Customer Service standard. The Charter had not been updated recently to reflect current service standards. Therefore, a review had been carried out during the year and amendments made including updating of information to include the Heritage Service and removal of the 20-minute target for same day production of documents. This reflected the move to advance orders of documents meaning fewer requests were dealt with on the same day.

During her presentation of the report, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities highlighted the complement received from Bernadette Russell for the assistance given to her family in tracing information regarding her grandmother, as referred to in the Annual Report. Members then paid tribute to the work of all staff in the Archive and Heritage Service who had made a valuable contribution towards achieving the various objectives set out in the Forward Plan.

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

(ii) That Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archives Service: Annual Report 2018/19 be approved for publication.

(iii) That the draft revised Risk Register for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Service as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

(iv) That the draft revised Service Charter as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be approved.

5. Joint Archives Service: Revenue Outturn 2018/19

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Corporate Services (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) setting out (i) the final net revenue outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2018/19 and (ii) the predicted outturn for 2019/20 (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

Members noted that the final net revenue outturn was £842,309 compared to an approved budget of £864,070 which gave an underspend of £21,761 of which £19,447 was to be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. The underspend had occurred owing to managed savings on (i) salaries and; (ii) training both of which had offset an under recovery of income (£4,984). The remainder of the underspend had been committed for the purchase of new shelving for the Solon Room at City Central Library, Hanley.

The balance in the General Reserve was £307,766 which included £153,079 New Burdens Grant Funding for investment in new archive storage capacity. The balance in the Archive Acquisition Reserve was £57,542.

With regard to 2019/20, the net spend to date was £66,342 ie 10.5% of the current Revenue Budget (£633,770). However, once the impact of the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy on the Authority's base budget was taken into account, it was expected that there would be a £220,640 overspend at the year's end owing to the anticipated reconfiguration of archive services. In the event that this overspend materialised, it would be met from a County Council central budget rather than the Archives Services General Reserve.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the terms of the Joint Agreement between the two Authorities prevented either the General or Acquisition reserves from being used for purposes other than supporting the Joint Archives Service.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

6. Staffordshire History Centre Project - Update

The Committee considered a report by 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 development of the Staffordshire History Centre project.

At their meeting on 15 May 2019, the County Council's Cabinet agreed that a further Stage 1 application should be made to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) (formerly the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)) in respect of funding for the Development Phase of the Staffordshire History Centre Project, during the 2019/20 bidding round. This followed the unsuccessful Stage 2 (Implementation Phase) bid made during 2018. In addition, Cabinet agreed that match funding of £4,000 should be earmarked to support the Development Phase in the event the application was successful.

The new project vision and aim was:-

“Placing Heritage at the Heart of the Community: the Staffordshire History Centre.

A dynamic partnership between Staffordshire Archives and Heritage, William Salt Library trust and Staffordshire communities to create a centre of excellence to engage the wider community. Unique collections of designated outstanding archives rare books, and museum objects will be brought together, interpreted and made fully accessible for the first time.

Comprising:-

- Truly engaging spaces where people of all ages can learn, share and engage with Staffordshire's heritage;
- Research centre for people to discover their own stories and develop new skills;
- Presentation of unique collections in proper storage conditions;
- Conserving and opening access to a loved Georgian Grade II* Listed Building;
- Establishment of a mutually supportive network of history groups, community organisations, schools and universities, in partnership with the History Centre;
- Touring exhibitions, activities, sharing resources and partnership to deliver a countywide offer.

This creative blend of exhibitions, engagement activities, learning and volunteering opportunities will engage individuals and community groups in researching, curating, cataloguing and discovering their own histories, The Staffordshire History Centre will complement and enhance Stafford's tourism offer, ensuring that Staffordshire's communities are placed at the heart of this project. We will re-imagine our collections and spaces to reflect their relevance to the lives of Staffordshire people and communities".

The new Phase 1 application referenced work undertaken during the previous Development Phase (2016-2018). However, it was shorter and required a smaller grant of £36,000 to review and strengthen existing plans. The estimated cost of the History Centre (£5,235,288) would be funded by (i) NLHF grant aid (£3,900); (ii) the Archive Service's General Reserve (£251,000) and donations from key stakeholders including (i) Hildegard Simon Trust (£100,000); (ii) William Salt Library Trust (£58,000); (iii) Welcome Trust (£31,340); (iv) Friends and depositors fundraising (£28,537); (v) Lichfield Diocese (£5,000) and; (vi) Staffordshire County Council Capital Funding (£861,411).

A project stakeholder event was held on 20 May 2019 to update partners on progress with regard to the project. The revised proposals which also included a new digital offer comprising website, search facility and online catalogue, were supported by all attendees. Further feedback indicated that Partners were also keen to see greater digitisation of content including photographs, maps, Tudor material, poll books and twentieth century trade directories.

Members noted the key dates for the project were as follows:-

- Stage 1 bid submission – 28 May 2019;
- Detailed business case for future storage – Autumn 2019;
- Stage 1 bid decision – September 2019;
- Stage 2 bid development phase – September 2019 to March 2020;
- Stage 2 bid submission;
- Project delivery – June 2020 to 2025;
- Staffordshire History Centre opened by September 2022.

During the discussion which ensued the Committee welcomed the decision by Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet and the continued support received for the project from key stakeholders. They thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for her efforts and expressed their hope that the Phase 1 and 2 bids achieved success in the current NLHF bidding round.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

7. Date of next meeting - Thursday 14 November 2019 at 10.30 am, City Central Library, Hanley

RESOLVED – That the date, time and venue of the next meeting be noted.

8. 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 in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972, indicated below”.

9. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2019

(exemption paragraph 3)

RESOLVED – That the exempt minutes be confirmed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman