

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 3 December 2018**

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

PART ONE

57. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting,

58. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

59. Predicted Outturn 2018/19

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 Archives Service for 2018/19 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

Members noted that a spend of £847,029 was predicted against an approved budget of £864,070 resulting in an underspend of £17,041 which will be transferred to the General Reserve at the year end. Members noted that the service's current net spend was £462,336 or 53.5% of the total net budget.

During his presentation the Finance Officer highlighted an error in the report in respect of Appendix 3 which stated that the General Reserve balance as at 31 March 2019 was predicated to be £311,988. However, this figure did not include the net -£22,969 contribution made to the Staffordshire History Centre Project Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid. Therefore, subject to the predicated underspend as set above, the balance in the General Reserve as at 31 March 2019 would be £289,019, which included the return of previously approved Heritage Lottery Fund Stage 2 Bid funding, following the Services' recent unsuccessful HLF Grant application.

Following clarification on the General Reserve balance it was proposed that £5,000 from the Reserve be earmarked to fund the purchase of shelving and furniture for the new Lichfield History Centre Access Point based at the soon to be opened Library at the former St Mary's Church site, Lichfield.

With regard to the Archive Acquisition Reserve which was held to enable the purchase of local collections, the predicated balance as at 31 March 2018 was unchanged at £57,542.

Members also noted that recommendations arising from a review into the Joint Archive Service's budget setting methodology had been included on the Agenda for their consideration.

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

(b) That £5,000 from the General Reserve be earmarked for the purchase of shelving and furniture for the Lichfield history Centre Access Point.

(c) That the recommendations made following a review of the Joint Archives Service's future budget setting methodology be considered as set out below.

60. Review of Fees and Charges

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire Council Council) and the Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) regarding a review of the Joint Archive Services' fees and charges for 2019.

Members noted that the Archive Services' fee and charges had been reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they reflected changes in demand and costs of providing the various services available in terms of staff time, equipment and travelling. In addition, account was taken of the prevailing economic climate and the availability of the on-line service offer.

For 2018/19 it was proposed that the charge for research and associated work be left unchanged. However, the rates charged for copying documents were to be revised together with those for talks, visits and permissions to publish. These changes aimed to simplify the charging structure and reflect technological advances which meant that different prices for eg microfilm copies, photocopies and digital scans could no longer be justified. However, it was proposed to maintain a price differential between copies ordered in Reading Rooms and those ordered by post owing to the respective staff time involved.

Photographic permits were well used by customers and represented a saving on the price of purchasing multiple copies of documents. Therefore, it was proposed that the cost of permits be increased in proportion to the cost of supplying hard copies in order to help maintain an income stream for the service whilst ensuring customer choice.

The revised charges proposed for publication aimed to support local and academic research whilst ensuring commercial providers met the cost of the time involved in clearing copy rights on their behalf. In addition, it was proposed to abolish the differential item charge for e-book rights and to replace it with a flat rate encompassing all items to be used in a particular publication.

However, it was proposed that the baseline charge for talks and visits be held to maintain affordability with potential users of the service.

During the discussion which ensued Members expressed their support for the proposed changes as set out in Appendix two to the report. The Member representative of the County Council added that the increased charges were modest and application of the new schedule would ensure greater fairness for service users.

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

(b) That the various revised fees and charges set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved for implementation by the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Service with effect from 1 April 2019.

61. 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 the outcome of a review of the Joint Agreement for Archive Services which had been undertaken.

The County and City Councils established the Joint Committee under an existing Agreement approved in 2011 in order to discharge their functions with regard to archive services. The Agreement operated under a nine-year rolling term with automatic extensions made every three years for a further three-year term (subject to neither party wishing to terminate)

Provisions for the management of the Joint Archive Committee Budget were set out in paragraph 8 of the above-mentioned Agreement. Agreed revenue expenditure was apportioned annually between both authorities according to the Registrar General's most recently published population estimates for the area.

The Joint Committee's Revenue Budget comprised two elements ie (i) the Core Budget which included the costs of professional management of the Archive service, the conservation of collections and service-wide programmes eg the online catalogue and (ii) the Public Sites and Services Budget which included the costs of public service delivery of the County Record Office, City Archives Department and the services out-store located in Stafford.

Since the Joint Agreement was last reviewed in 2015, both the County and City Councils have had to reduce their budgets in order to deliver significant savings. However, the reduction in both the Core Services and Public Sites Budgets meant that maintenance of the split calculation based on population estimates was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. Therefore, it was proposed to remove this provision from the Agreement and introduce a new funding arrangement based on each Authority's budgetary requirements for the operation of their respective part of the service.

In addition, other minor amendments were proposed to the Agreement as set out in Appendix two to the report including the deletion of reference to the Lichfield Record Office (which was due to close during December 2018), and replacement with the St Mary's Centre' Lichfield (due to open during the same month).

During the discussion which ensued, Members noted that the proposed changes to the funding arrangements would not lead to cross subsidisation of the service between Partner Authorities. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities emphasised that although the existing Agreement terms had served the

Partnership well, financial constraints and increased population statistics meant that the proposed changes were vital to ensure the long sustainability of the joint service.

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

(b) That the proposed changes to the Joint Agreement between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council as set out in Appendix two to the report be approved.

(c) That the final revised version of the Joint Agreement be submitted to the Committee for approval at their meeting on 7 February 2019.

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

63. 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.

PART TWO

64. Staffordshire History Centre Project

The Committee received an exempt joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Customer Services (Staffordshire County Council) updating them on progress with regard to the Staffordshire History Centre Project and took decisions thereon.

Chairman