

Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee meeting held on 8 August 2022

Present: Mark Sutton, Lorraine Beardmore and Victoria Wilson

Apologies for absence: John Francis

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved – That Councillor L Beardmore be appointed Chairman until the Annual Meeting in June 2023.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Staffordshire History Centre Project - Update

A progress report on the development of the Staffordshire History Centre was considered. Key points to note were that the construction contract was expected to be awarded in early autumn 2022, the William Salt Library Collection had been successfully moved to a temporary location and staff and volunteers at both that Library and the Staffordshire Records Office had relocated to a temporary base at Eastgate House. Various projects and events were taking place as the service continued to be accessible to the public.

Updates on the temporary arrangements and communications about the History Centre project were regularly published.

The first tranche of Heritage Funding (£63,025.83) had been approved with other sources of funding continually being investigated. Stafford Borough Council had recently agreed a £250,000 bid in their UK Shared Prosperity investment plan towards the public realm aspects of the History Centre (subject to Government approval).

The temporary closure of full facilities and services had necessitated the development of a Public Access Model whereby access would be permitted on one day per week where necessary to fulfil statutory or time sensitive requirements. Volunteers and staff would have limited access to strong

rooms throughout the period of the Project to enable them to provide copies of documentation where the client does not need direct access to any original version.

Proposed Branding for the project had been reviewed to take account of comments at earlier Joint Committee meetings. Various revised options were presented. Discussing those options, Members focussed on their flexibility to suit individual collections/exhibitions and compatibility with each Councils' own branding.

Resolved- that:

- a) the progress report be noted
- b) the Public Access Model be approved
- c) approval be given to the Branding based on an 'S' as illustrated at Appendix 3 to the report.

5. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service and Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service: Volunteer Policy Review

Lead Officers presented a draft updated Volunteer Policy and accompanying Volunteer Agreement explaining that they had been developed following consultation with Volunteers on their personal needs and reasons for volunteering and their expectations of both the role and of the Councils.

The Volunteer Policy was compatible with other policies in use by the Councils, acknowledged that volunteering was an individual, personal experience and introduced a more public facing approach. The inclusion of a Code of Conduct was a key change, reflecting best practice and addressing safeguarding considerations.

The Volunteer Agreement aimed to offer a quality experience and defined the expectations of each party. The review exercise was now informing a revision of the County Council's Policies.

The importance of not deterring volunteers by having too bureaucratic processes was stressed and acknowledged.

Resolved – That the Updated Volunteer Policy and use of the enhanced volunteer Agreement be approved; the inclusion of best practice guidelines to encourage knowledge sharing and continuity across the service be noted.

6. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service and Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service: Joint Collections Statement

Lead Officers reported that whilst it had originally been intended to develop one Joint Collecting Policy for all 3 disciplines, further review had shown this

approach would not meet their needs therefore an overarching Joint Collection Statement had been drafted.

Consideration was given to the draft Statement which aimed to be more proactive, better defining what the collections should contain, moving away from responding to individual offers.

Resolved – That the Joint Collection Statement be approved; it's content to be reviewed on a 3 yearly basis.

7. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service and Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service: Annual Report

Lead Officers presented the Annual Report on the work of the Joint Archive Service and Archive and Heritage Service for the period April 2021 – March 2022, together with the updated Risk Register.

The securing of funding and development of the History Centre during the reporting period was detailed, together with statistics showing that whilst visitor numbers had not fully recovered to pre COVID 19 pandemic levels, progress was pleasing.

Details were given of key exhibitions, accessions and collections with particular reference made to the 'Case for the Ordinary' exhibition.

Performance Indicators showed a 36% increase in use of the service and a 99% customer satisfaction rate. Instances of on line access to the service had exceeded 2.1 million. Members discussed the quality of the service and the need for a communications campaign to increase public awareness of its existence. The planned transfer of the Stoke-on-Trent Archives Service to the City Museum and Art Gallery was expected to contribute to increasing that awareness.

The Risk Register was drawn up in conjunction with the County Council's Internal Audit Service and aimed to identify risks to collections, staff, volunteers, the public and the future sustainability of the service.

Resolved – That the Annual Report 2021/22 be noted and publicised by both Councils, and the Joint Committee's appreciation of the work and commitment of staff and volunteers to the delivery of the Service and preparation for the History Centre development be recorded.

8. Joint Archive Service - 2021/22 Final Outturn and Predicted Outturn 2022/23

The Final Outturn for 2021/22 had shown the Joint Committee's revenue net spend was £0.761m compared to the approved budget of £0.761m which produced an overall breakeven position.

For 2022/23, the Joint Archives net spend is currently £0.074m, nearly 9% of the current net revenue budget of £0.812m. The latest forecast is for an overall breakeven position this year.

The Final Outturn for 2021/22 had shown the Joint Committees General Reserves to be £413,387 comprising:

Staffordshire County Council	£286,600
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	£124,339

Future transactions, particularly for the History Centre were expected to reduce that Reserve to £179,662 by March 2023.

The 2021/22 Acquisitions Reserve of £57,542 was expected to remain static for 2022/23. This Reserve was specifically held to provide funds should a particularly important large collection become available for purchase.

Including Art Fund Grant for Minton (£10,301) the overall Joint reserve budget 2021/22 had an outturn of £481,230, forecast to be £247,505 by 31 March 2023.

Resolved – That the Joint Archive Service Financial outturn for 2021/22 and Predicted Outturn for 2022/23 be noted.

9. Date of next meeting

Thursday 10 November 2022.
To be rearranged.

10. 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 as indicated.

The Joint Committee proceeded to consider the following items:

11. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 (exemption paragraphs 2 and 3)

Resolved – That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

12. Relocation of Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (exemption paragraphs 2 and 4)

The committee received a verbal report from the Lead officer updating them on progress on the relocation of Stoke-on-Trent City Archives Service.

Resolved – that the update be noted.

Chairman