

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 21 November 2013**

Present: Mike Lawrence (Chairman), Michael Greatorex and Andy Platt (Substitute)

Apologies for absence: Janine Bridges and Ian Parry.

PART ONE

11. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

12. Predicted Outturn 2013-14

The Committee considered the joint report of the County Council's Director of Finance and Resources and the City Director of Corporate Resources on the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2013/14 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that the predicted outturn for the Service showed an expected spend of £663,924 compared with an approved budget of £668,180. This gave an expected underspend of £4,256 which would be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year.

The Committee also noted that there were two reserves which were held by the Joint Archive Service, these being the General Reserve (which currently had a balance of £86,003 of which £12,000 had already been earmarked for the shelving project at Stoke); and the Archive Acquisition Reserve (which currently stood at £62,342).

The approval of the Committee was sought to the allocation of £50,000 from the General Reserve towards the costs of the proposed extension to the Stafford Record Office.

In response to a question from Cllr. Platt, Kaye Chadwick indicated that, although the two reserves were held separately, subject to the approval of the Committee, funds could be transferred between them although this had not been done in the past. She also confirmed that the funding in the Archive Acquisition Reserve had last been utilised in 2012/13.

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

(b) That the request to use £50,000 from the general reserve be approved.

13. Review of Fees and Charges 2014-15

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services on the annual review of the fees and charges levied by the Joint Archive Service (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that, each year, the Service reviewed its fees and charges based on the economic climate and the take up of its services. For 2014/15 minor increases to some fees were proposed including:

- Introduction of a quick research fee of £6.25 for a 15 minute look up of a single item in a record
- Single marriage bond search fee
- Increase to the first copy price for the postal photocopy service
- Increase to the first copy price the postal micro print service
- Increase to fees for talks and visits

It was also proposed to withdraw the duplicate parish register fiche service from 31 March 2014 as this service was no longer required due to the information being available online

The Committee noted that the review had been carried out following a benchmarking exercise with neighbouring archive services and in consultation with frontline staff. In addition each year the Archive Service carried out a consultation forum with a mix of archive users, partners and stakeholders within the service.

The Chairman commented that, with regard to the proposal to withdraw the duplicate parish register fiche service from 31 March 2014, this could lead to a gap when no service would be available pending the launch of the on-line service in the Summer of 2014. In response, the Head of Archives indicated the duplicate parish register fiche service tended to be used sporadically and users often had to wait until the Service had sufficient orders to process. Therefore, in practice, the gap in service would have minimal impact on users.

Cllr. Platt suggested that, with regard to fees for talks and visits, a separate charge should be levied to cover travel costs in respect of talks given by Archive staff to out of county external organisations.

RESOLVED – That, subject to a separate charge being introduced to cover travel costs in respect of talks given by Archive staff to out of county external organisations, the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from April 2014.

14. Award of Contract for Digitisation of Key Family History Collections

The Committee received a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services on the award of the contract for the digitisation of key family history collections held by the Archive Service (schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that the contract for the digitisation of the Service's key family history collections was awarded to Brightsolid in March. Since then the Archive Service, with support from Procurement and Legal Services, had been negotiating with the company to sign the contract. The contract was finally signed towards the end of October and would last for 7 years with the option to extend for a further 3 years. As a

result in the delays in signing the contract, the project was now seven months behind schedule. It was anticipated that the first online content would be launched in the Summer of 2014.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

15. Collection Policy and Strategy

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services on the review of the Service's Collection Policy (schedule 4 to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service first developed a Collection Policy in 2000. The purpose of the policy was to define the types of collections that the Service would actively collect, ensure the Service did not conflict with or duplicate other collecting organisations' policies, and identify areas in the Collections which needed to be better represented.

The review of the Policy and incorporation of the Collections Development Strategy had been carried out to ensure that the Archive Service would be ready to apply for the new Archive Accreditation Standard. This standard had just been launched by the National Archives and the Archive Service would work towards achieving it over the next 2-3 years.

The Head of Archives indicated that, with regard to the identification of areas in the Collections which needed to be better represented, the Service had limited resources available to carry out major surveys of archives held by other organisations. The last major survey was to encourage deposit of sports records in connection with the 2012 Cultural Olympiad. This achieved modest success but sports records still continued to be one of the areas requiring better representation. Other areas identified as priorities were voluntary organisations, creative industries, and health organisations which had recently experienced significant changes.

She added that the key strategy for the service was to develop advocates to support it in acquiring new collections. It had been agreed that the Friends organisation and volunteers could help to promote the work of the Service and signpost potential depositors to discuss their records with the Archive Service.

The Committee also noted that Service had an annual target of 220 approaches to donors and depositors for new collections.

In response to a question from Cllr. Platt concerning collecting the records held by community groups, particularly new and emerging communities, the Head of Archives indicated that these groups often did not hold/retain any formal records. Cllr Greatrex indicated that Members had a role in acting as champions for the Archive Service and encouraging their local communities to engage with the Service. The Chairman added that, in addition to Members, VAST had a role to play in publicising the Service.

RESOLVED – (a) That the revised Collection Policy for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service be approved.

(b) That action be taken to publicise the work of the Archive Service through local Members and VAST.

16. Digital Preservation Policy

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services on the review of the Service's Digital Preservation Policy (schedule 5 to the signed minutes).

The Committee noted that the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service first developed a Digital Preservation Policy in 2007. The purpose of the policy was to establish a means of collecting digital records and ensuring their long term preservation. The review of the Policy had been carried out to ensure that the Archive Service would be ready to apply for the new Archive Accreditation Standard which the Archive Service would be working towards achieving over the next 2-3 years.

The Head of Archives indicated that most records in local authorities and even smaller organisations were created in digital format. However, unlike paper records, their maximum lifespan was assumed to be no more than ten years. Digital records could be lost permanently, and instantaneously. Urgent action was needed to ensure the preservation of digital records within Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

The new strategic objectives contained in the Policy aimed to build on the existing good work and to mainstream the process of accepting digital archives. They included:

- To continue to monitor contact with key potential depositors of digital archives to ensure that the Archive Service is ready to receive digital deposits.
- To maintain involvement in developments with Staffordshire County Council with regard to future developments of the EDRMS and eventual digital preservation of SCC records.
- To continue to add records to the Digital Archive Repository (DAR)
- To develop and agree protocols for staff access to the DAR and launch public access delivered through the reading rooms of the Archive Service.
- To deliver training for all professional staff on Digital Archives
- To produce public guidance on preferred file formats for deposit within the Archive Service.
- To investigate setting up a DAR for Stoke on Trent City Archives.
- To continue to monitor the Internet Archive and UK Web Archive as a means of ensuring long term access to Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council historical website pages.
- To continue to monitor current best practice in Digital Preservation.

There would also be a strong focus on training across the Service to ensure that all professional staff became more familiar with dealing with digital archives.

RESOLVED – That the revised Digital Preservation Policy for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service be approved.

17. Date of next meeting - 20 February 2014

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday 20 February 2014 at 10.30 am at the County Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford.

18. Exclusion of the public

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.

19. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013

(Exemption paragraph 3)

RESOLVED – That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2013 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

20. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire Record Office Extension

(Exemption paragraphs 3 and 4)

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services on the proposal to extend Staffordshire Record Office (schedule 6 to the signed minutes) and took decisions thereon.

Chairman