

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 21 December 2017

Review of Fees and Charges

Recommendation(s)

1. That the fees and charges proposed in Appendix two to this report be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from April 2018.

2. Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The Archive Service fees and charges have been reviewed on an annual basis for a number of years to allow the Service to adapt its services according to demand and cost of provision. The proposed fees and charges are recommended for approval as they represent a fair and reasonable increase.

Background

4. The Archive Service generates income from the following sources: a range of copying services; the sale of photographic permits; research, transcription and certification services; sales of publications; donations; and fees for talks by and group visits to the Archive Service. In addition from 2014 the Archive Service has benefitted from income from its partnership with a commercial provider to make key archive collections available online.

5. Last year the Committee reviewed the charges for copying in its various forms (photocopying, digital copying and photography) and the fees associated with talks, visits and permissions to publish. It is not proposed to review these again this year but to review the Research Fee and associated fees.

Research Fee

6. The Archive Service offers a research service to its users. This is taken up by people abroad, people unable to visit the searchrooms of the service through disability or work or other commitments, or simply people who recognise that the staff of the Service have knowledge and research skills that they themselves lack. The research service is charged for in order to reflect both the cost to the Service of devoting staff time to carrying out a task which could be carried out in person by the enquirer, and also the market rate for similar services offered by neighbouring archive services and private researchers.

7. Over the years a number of specialised services, such as offering a certification service from parish registers have been offered by the Archive Service and in 2015 the rates of these charges were aligned with the Research Service charge. This recognises the fact that staff time is being devoted to a private enquiry, outside of the normal reading room service.

8. This report seeks to streamline the charging structure of the archive service by creating a single new charge for all fees that were previously tied to the Research fee, designated the Staff Facilitation Fee. The Staff Facilitation Fee will also be tied to the Research Fee. Its scope will be:

Staff time used to make a customer request for service possible, including but not restricted to

- supervising documents outside the research room during professional photography, transporting documents to an external office for microfilming, conservation or other purpose
- certifying the content of archives held within the service for use in religious, legal or other proceedings
- preparing or conserving documents in order that a customer order can be carried out
- transcribing or translating documents in private hands

9. The introduction of this fee also creates flexibility for the Archive Service to respond to new or exceptional circumstances and provides a transparent basis for charging, rather than the creation of ad hoc charges.

Closure of Lichfield Record Office

10. Two fees specific to Lichfield Record Office will be removed as no longer applicable following the closure of the Office and the transfer of the records to Staffordshire Record Office storage. These are 'Photocopies of Wills' and 'Marriage Bond Searches'

Level of Fee

11. The current research service fee is £28, it was raised to that level in April 2016. It is now proposed to raise it to £30. As the fee is, in certain cases, levied by the quarter or the half hour it is desirable that it should be reasonably divisible by 4. £2 represents a 7% increase, which is in line with current inflation. The average fee levied by our neighbouring archive services (Walsall, Wolverhampton, Warwickshire, Shropshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire) is £29, so the revised fee is in line with the sector and customer expectation.

12. It should be noted that the online provision of the parish registers and the wills and marriage bonds at Lichfield has resulted in a significant drop in the number of research requests received by the Archive Service with a consequent drop in the amount of income received.

Other charges

13. The charge for a computer print-out in the Archive Service has hitherto been 10p in line with the charge made by Libraries in the respective

authorities. Staffordshire Libraries have increased their charge to 20p and it is proposed to change the Archive Service charges to reflect this.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications: In reviewing its fees the Archive Service has continued to maintain its lower research fee for people with disabilities.

Legal implications: The content of this report complies with the joint agreement governing the work of the Joint Archive Service.

Resource and Value for money implications: Overall the Joint Archive Service has income targets of £48,320 which breaks down to £6,300 for the City service and £42,020 for the County service.

Risk implications: At this point in the year income is under target for research and photocopying. Officers are managing spend within budgets to offset under recovery of income.

Climate Change implications: No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening: No significant implications.

APPENDIX 2

STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE- ON- TRENT ARCHIVE SERVICE

REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES, 2018/2019 -attached to report

Author's Name: Chris Latimer, City Archivist, Stoke-on-Trent

Telephone No: (01782) 238403

Location: City Central Library, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

List of Background Papers