

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

Present: Gill Heath, Anthony Munday and Michael Greatorex (Invitee/Observer)

Apologies for absence: Philip White

PART ONE

40. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

41. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

42. Predicted Outturn 2017/18 and 2018/19 Revenue Budget

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Resources (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Community Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) informing them of the predicted outturn for 2017/18 and the proposed net revenue budget for 2018/19 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The predicted outturn for 2017/18 was £718,045 against an approved budget of £746,500 which gave an underspend of £28,455. This underspend had arisen owing to managed savings on staff and lower than expected expenditure on (i) training; (ii) transport and; (iii) supplies and services.

The General Reserve currently held a balance of £31,411 (net of Heritage Lottery bid funding commitments) and the Archive Acquisition Reserve a balance of £57,542. Members noted that the City Council were seeking approval for the release of £30,000 from the General Reserve for various capital works in the Solon Room, City Central Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent in order to accommodate contents of the Solon, Minton and Doulton Library Collections.

The proposed net revenue budget for 2018/19 of £864,070 represented an increase of £117,570 over the previous year. Under the Joint Archives Agreement (JAA) the percentage charged between the two Authorities was 77.41% to the County Council and 22.59% to the City Council. This ratio was based on population levels across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Therefore, for 2018/19 the County Council were responsible for £668,770 and the City Council for £195,300 and both Authorities had confirmed that they had sufficient budgetary provision to meet these costs.

However, owing to pressures on both Authorities' revenue budgets, it was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve the exact split according to the above-mentioned ratio. It was therefore proposed that a review of the JAA be undertaken with a view to changing the apportionment for future years.

During the discussion which ensued, the Member representative of the City Council sought clarification of the reasons why apportionment of the Joint Archives Budget was likely to become increasingly problematic. In reply, an officer representative of the County Council explained that previously, elements of the County Council's contributions had been vired from budgets which lay outside the JAA. However, this facility would be unavailable from 2019/20 onwards owing to a reduction in funding. It was expected that an additional post to be included in the JAA by the City Council would have major implications for the County Council. Therefore, a change in the JAA funding mechanism was required so that the Authority could meet their commitments.

Another officer representative of the County Council commented on the timeliness for the JAA review having regard to (i) the time which had elapsed since the previous review in 2010 and; (ii) the work undertaken by both Authorities to integrate their various collections. A report would be submitted to their next meeting giving details of a proposed workable revision to the Agreement.

In response to a question from a Member of the City Council, the Officer representative of the Authority confirmed that there would be no additional costs for them arising from the proposed revisions to the JAA.

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

(b) That the proposed investment of £30,000 for shelving and minor capital works at the Solon Room, City Central Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent be approved.

(c) That a review of the Joint Archives Agreement between the County and City Councils be undertaken particularly in relation to the annual budgetary apportionment method between the two Authorities.

(d) That the 2018/19 net revenue budget be approved.

43. Staffordshire History Centre Project

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) updating them on progress with regard to the Staffordshire History Centre Project (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The Archive and Heritage Service had submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding towards the development of a Staffordshire History Centre comprising (i) accommodation for records; (ii) a new community exhibition space; (iii) modern search rooms and strong rooms to provide storage for an additional 25 years of future collections.

Following consideration by the HLF, a grant of £333,400 was awarded for the Development Phase of the project with a further £4m being earmarked for Phase 2, subject to a successful application to be made. Permission to commence work was confirmed by HLF in October 2016 and during 2017 several pieces of work were commissioned which were required for Phase 2.

The project was being managed by a Project Board and Team.

On 19 March 2018 various documents were submitted to the HLF for a mid-stage review including (i) a reviewed and updated Project Vision “The Staffordshire History Centre will create imaginative and exciting ways to connect Staffordshire people and their stories”; (ii) a reviewed and updated Activity Plan which gave greater detail about the activities to be delivered, set more ambitious targets and included the development of the Active Partnership initiative; (iii) an Interpretation Plan setting out new proposals for the interpretation of the History Centre; (iv) Architectural Designs for the Centre; (v) revised Business, Maintenance and Management Plans which included financial data, forecasts and anticipated maintenance costs over a ten year period and; (vi) a Conservation Management Plan.

During her presentation of the report the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that all project costs had been reviewed and compared against those included in the Round 1 bid. Assuming that the bids for matched funding were successful it was considered that the project remained both affordable and deliverable. A total of £614,000 match funding had already been secured and a further £336,000 was being sought.

The outcome of the mid stage review was expected to be received from the HLF by the end of April 2018 and depending on the outcome, a Stage 2 bid would be submitted prior to their 14 June 2018 deadline.

During the discussion which ensued Members thanked officers from both authorities for the work they had undertaken to date in supporting the mid stage review. The Deputy Chief Executive informed them that the HLF had reduced funding available to support projects going forward and therefore the next bidding round was likely to be very competitive. Commenting on the review in general she said that various external partners had been involved and the process had been detailed and thorough. In response to a question from the member representative of the City Council, she said that in the event Stage 2 funding did not become available, further consideration as to how the service would achieve Archive Service Accreditation would be required. Although it was difficult to envisage how the bid could be re-submitted in its entirety, it might be possible pursue smaller projects included in the Activity Plan.

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

(b) That the Committee thank officers from both Partner Authorities for the work they had undertaken in supporting the Heritage Lottery Fund’s mid-stage review of the Staffordshire History Centre Project.

44. Forward Plan 2018 and Predicted Performance Outturn 2017-18

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 informing them of the 2018 review of the Service's Forward Plan "Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive and Heritage Service Vision" and detailing the predicted performance outturn against the targets which had been set (Schedule 3 to the signed minutes). A copy of the proposed revised forward plan was appended to the report for Members' information.

The Forward Plan 2015 – 2025 had been approved by the Committee at their meeting on 26 March 2015. Whilst the Archive service had previously worked to a three year planning cycle, the scope of the current plan had been extended to cover ten years having regard to the time needed to deliver some of the changes required and its role in achieving the transformation of the service.

The proposed revised plan included:-

- Updated context headlines in order to reflect progress made by the service since 2015 and changes which had occurred including closure of the Lichfield Record Office on 1 January 2016.
- Updated list of Partners who worked with the service to reflect the changes which had occurred following the transfer of the Shugborough Estate to the National Trust on November 2016.
- Inclusion of a new section on the project vision, aims and objectives for the Staffordshire History Centre (SHC).
- Inclusion of Information on collections, buildings, outreach, volunteers, partnerships and resources with current statistics and key achievements.

With regard to "Developing an Active Partnership Approach" Members noted that the joint working with the William Salt Library Trust had been strengthened by the adoption of a shared vision. In addition, new partnerships had been identified with local groups across the County and City and following engagement with stakeholders regarding future ways to interact with the service, a new Staffordshire History Centre Network was proposed. To date over 47 groups and organisations had agreed to support the project in some way.

Work was progressing on the establishment of a Development Trust in order to continue fundraising activity, in support of the History Centre, following the ending of the HLF grant.

During 2017/18 an estimated 7,800 hours had been given to the Archive and Heritage Service by volunteers in to support the delivery of the Annual Activity Plan.

With regard to “Resilience and Sustainability”, five matched funding bids had been submitted to support the work of the service one of which had been successful, two had passed the first stage application process and a further two were still to be considered. In addition a further four bids were being developed for submission in 2018.

A major depositor event was held in November 2017 to showcase the SHC project and encourage donations. A further depositor had made a separate approach to the service and was making a donation of £100,000 towards the project. In addition Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service continued to fundraise in support of the service focussing specifically on the SHC. During 2017/18 the value of this support had amounted to £123,000.

Various conservation programmes had been completed across the service during 2017/18 including the Minton Archive. However, the annual cataloguing programmes were still to be delivered although substantial support had been received from volunteers and donors to help with this work.

With regard to “Reaching and Engaging New Audiences” Members noted that the service had piloted new activities during the year including (i) engagement with schools and pupils in order to test new learning activities; (ii) attendance by staff at village fetes and fairs to raise awareness of the service and obtain feedback on proposals for events and the new offer at the SHC.

Plans for the public spaces at the SHC and outreach offer had been developed and tested. In addition, digital newsletters had been launched for the Archive and Heritage Service and the SHC project and both had succeeded in reaching new audiences.

Activity and Interpretation Plans had been developed for the SHC project with stakeholder input. Both plans covered a four year period and included measures to reach new audiences through events and community projects. The Interpretation Plan outlined how collections were to be viewed at exhibitions both onsite at the SHC and through touring exhibitions.

With regard to “Sharing Knowledge Across the Sector” Members noted that the Archive and Heritage Service had contributed to the wider sector working with a number of different organisations. It was an active member of Archives West Midlands with two County Council staff members being trustees. In addition, staff had given presentations to two conferences during the year on conservation and Archives West Midlands. Furthermore two case studies had been published in the National Archives’ Volunteer Cataloguing Guidance and in the Touring Exhibitions Group’s journal on the First World War.

The service had worked closely with local history groups and museums in the County and City areas to share knowledge and support work in local communities. It was planned to widen this role following the established of the Staffordshire History Network referred to above.

With regard to “Online Presence and Remote Access”, Members noted that a Digital Plan had been developed as part of the SHC project which focussed on digitisation priorities and the development of a website to make access easier for users. The Service continued to add content to its existing online platforms including (i) two new name indexes; (ii) additional images on Past Track and; (iii) more collections added to the online catalogue.

Work had also progressed on plans for managing digital archives as part of a consortium with Archives West Midlands. The service took part in a survey to assess readiness for handling digital archives and tested a software package.

During her presentation of the report the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to provide the Committee with further details of the work undertaken by volunteers in support of the Archives and Heritage Service to a future meeting with a view to making a report to the Staffordshire People Helping People Board who oversaw the development of a community based approach in the County.

In the discussion which ensued the Committee welcomed the good progress which had been made in achieving the various aims set out in the Forward Plan and paid tribute to the volunteers who had made such a valuable contribution to the work of the service during the year.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

45. Date of next meeting - Thursday 14 June 2018, 10.30 am, City Central Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities undertook to liaise with the Chairman regarding a possible change to the calendared date for the next meeting of the Committee, having regard to the Heritage Lottery Fund’s deadline for submission of a Phase 2 grant application for the development of the Staffordshire History Centre.

RESOLVED – (a) That, if required, the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for Thursday 14 June 2018 2018, 10.30 am, City Central Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent be brought forward to an earlier date.

46. 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 12 A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972, indicated below.

PART TWO

47. Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2017

RESOLVED - The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman