

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 28 June 2018**

Present: Mike Davies (Invitee/Observer), Janine Bridges (Substitute) and
Gill Heath

Apologies for absence: Anthony Munday and Gill Burnett

PART ONE

48. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED – (a) That Mr. A. Munday be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in June 2019.

(b) That Mrs. G. Heath be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in 2019.

49. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest.

50. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

51. Joint Archives Services: Annual Report 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 Resources – Assistant Chief Executive (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) giving details of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Annual Report 2017/18 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes) which had been produced in accordance with the Joint Agreement.

The Annual report provided an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

This was the third year in the current three-year planning cycle for the service. The report highlighted some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the service within the current Forward Plan 2015-2018 including:- (i) developing an active partnership approach; (ii) developing resilience and sustainability; (iii) reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences; (iv) sharing knowledge across the UK and (v) increasing online presence and remote access.

Members noted that it had been a very productive year with the most noticeable successes including (i) the development of the Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF)

Staffordshire History Centre; (ii) the achievement of Archive Accreditation in July 2017; (iii) the continued work on funded cataloguing projects and; (iv) the smooth transfer of collections from the former Lichfield Record Office. However, some dips in performance had occurred owing to the need to prioritise a heavy workload.

With regard to (i) above, fourteen events and activities had been held across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to consult with people about the project, feedback from which had been used to influence the Activity Plan/work undertaken by Project Partners. In addition a Conservation Management Plan had been prepared to Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 3 standard, setting out how collections were to be managed, interpreted, explained and conserved in the new Centre. Whilst the project had not been without its difficulties the HLF had confirmed that it had passed their mid-stage review and an application for further funding was submitted by the Authorities in June 2018.

With regard to (ii) above, presentation of the award took place in November 2017 by Val Johnson of the National Archive. At the ceremony, she informed delegates that only 3.5% of eligible services had so far been successful in gaining accreditation.

With regard to (iii) above, good progress had been made in (i) reducing the backlog of collections awaiting cataloguing and; (ii) processing new collections, owing to the success of the service in obtaining grant aid from external sources. Grants had been received from the National Archive for the Royal Doulton element of the Minton Archive and Wellcome Foundation for the Public Health Records project.

An audit of the Heritage and Archive Service was completed by Staffordshire County Council's Internal Audit Service in May 2017. The Audit examined financial management arrangements, processes and risk management. As a result a recommendation for the production of a risk register covering (i) physical risks to collections; (ii) risks to digital collection; (iii) risks to staff, members of the public and volunteers within the service; (iv) risks to operation of the public service and; (v) risks to forward planning for the service for review by the Joint Committee on an annual basis was made. Accordingly, a Register had been produced and was appended to the report for Members' information. The highest risk highlighted was the digital preservation of collections with a score of 20 out of 25.

During the discussion which ensued Members paid tribute to the work of the service for their significant achievements over the year notwithstanding their heavy workload. They were particular pleased to learn of (i) the 99% customer satisfaction rating gained in a recent local survey; (ii) the attainment of Archive Service Accreditation; (iii) the success of the Volunteer scheme and; (iv) progress in the development of the Staffordshire History Centre project.

The Member representative from Stoke-on-Trent City Council expressed her view that the service should seek to promote their achievements not least as an example of effective partnership working between Authorities. She went onto to enquire about the “Kitchen Goes to War” project and “Weeping Window” at Middleport Pottery as part of the commemoration of the Great War. In reply the Commissioner for Culture and Communities explained that Kitchen Goes to War had been devised by the County Council with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for use in Staffordshire Schools. The project focused on rationing and its impact on domestic life and she undertook to liaise with relevant officers regarding inclusion of schools in the City Council’s area in the initiative. With regard to the Weeping Window, the Director referred to the “Great War Staffordshire” Website at www.staffordshiregreatwar.com which sought to capture and publicise details of all local events being held to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. She undertook to ensure that Weeping Window had been included.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and the achievements of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Service be noted.

(b) That the draft Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service Annual Report 2017-2018 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved for publication.

(b) That the Risk Register for Joint Archive Service as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be approved.

52. Joint Archives Service: Revenue Outturn 2017/18

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Finance and Resources and the City Director Resources – Assistant Chief Executive setting out (i) the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2017/18 and (ii) the predicted outturn for 2018/19 (Scheduled 2 to the signed minutes).

The outturn indicated that the service had a final net revenue outturn of £702,461 compared to an approved budget of £746,500 which gave an overall underspend of £44,039. The underspend had occurred owing to (i) managed staff savings (£34,550) and; (ii) further savings on training, transport and supplies and service (£15,930) both of which had offset an under recovery of income (£5,774). This underspend was transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year.

The balance in the General Reserve was £45,451 (net of funding commitments) and the Archive Acquisition Reserve was £57,542.

With regard to 2018/19, the net revenue budget was £864,070 which represented an increase of £117,570 compared to 2017/18. Current spend as at 20 June 2018 was £151,141 which represented 17.5% of the total figure.

At their meeting on 3 April 2018 the Joint Committee agreed that a review be undertaken of the Joint Agreement to revise the way the budget was set annually having regard to the need for both Authorities to make savings and the difficulty which had been experienced in achieving the agreed budget ratio of 77.4% (Staffordshire) to 22.6% (Stoke-on-Trent). Members noted that the outcome of the review was intended to be reported to their next meeting.

During his presentation of the report the Director of Finance and Resources referred to paragraph 6 and said that the final net revenue outturn was set out in Appendix 1 to the report rather than 'Appendix 2' as stated.

In reply to a request for clarification from the Member representative of the City Council, the Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that the underspend achieved during the year was to be retained by the service for future use, re-iterating that the balance had already been transferred to the General Reserve.

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

(b) That the outcome of the review of the Joint Archives Agreement budget setting methodology be reported to their meeting currently scheduled for 15 November 2018.

53. Staffordshire History Centre Project Update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Resources – Assistant Chief Executive (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on progress with regard to the Staffordshire History Centre Project (Schedule 3 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 Phase 1 - the Development Phase of the Project in June 2016 with a further £4m being earmarked for Phase 2 – the Implementation Phase, subject to a successful application. Members learned that the County Council were notified on 10 April 2018 that they had passed their mid stage review and that the Phase 2 application had been submitted on 14 June 2018. It was anticipated that the outcome of the application would be known in September 2018 ie following consideration by the HLF Board.

The total cost of the project was £5.7m, of which 69% was to be met by the HLF. The remaining 31% amounting to £1.8m was the responsibility of the project partnership and to date £717,877 had been secured through (i) organisational funding from Staffordshire County Council and the William Salt Library; (ii) private donations; (iii) donations from Friends groups and (iv) grants from Trusts and Charities. An additional sum of £746,000 had also been secured by planned volunteer working during the project.

Therefore, the current shortfall in funding amounted to £159,000 and would be met through further applications for grant aid and fundraising by Friends Groups. The County Council had agreed to underwrite any shortfall which might occur as necessary reassurance to the HLF.

Subject to the outcome of the Stage 2 grant application, construction of the new Staffordshire History Centre would commence in the summer 2019 and be completed in the following year.

RESOLVED - That the report be received and noted.

54. Volunteers in the Archive and Heritage Service

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Resources – Assistant Chief Executive (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) highlighting the work which had been undertaken by volunteers in support of the Archive and Heritage Service (Schedule 4 to the signed minutes).

Members were informed of the key pieces of work undertaken by volunteers in support of the Archive and Heritage Service which included cataloguing, indexing and conserving of collections. The number of hours contributed by volunteers had increased from 6,266 in 2013/14 to 8,571 in 2017/18. This represented an in-kind value of £56,000. Whilst their roles had already expanded over this period, further opportunities were to become available to them through the development of the Staffordshire History Centre project.

Workshops held in May 2017 had revealed that many volunteers:-

- Enjoyed working with academic partners;
- Wished to receive more training but were not interested in obtaining a formal qualification;
- Would like more interaction with staff;
- Had strong traditional heritage skills eg archive cataloguing, transcribing and family history;
- Had good customer care skills;
- Enjoyed working with other volunteers;
- Enjoyed working with schools and/or young people.

However, very few volunteers currently had skills in social/digital media, working with families, and people with dementia or other special needs. A training programme had therefore been developed which included modules on (i) practical skills; (ii) collections management; (iii) research and conservation; (iv) customer care and working with people with special needs.

Volunteer projects in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire had been included as examples of best practice in the National Archives' publication 'Guidance for Volunteer Cataloguing in Archives'. The document highlighted projects which involved knowledgeable volunteers, trained and guided by professional staff working together to produce high quality catalogues.

Building on the success of the volunteer cataloguing projects an innovative training scheme had been trialled in order to train depositors to provide more information about their own collections prior to donation. The trial involved The Kinver Edge Committee (which managed the Rock Houses from 1917 onwards) who had been trained and provided with guidance on how to sort, weed, arrange and catalogue 140 files of correspondence, plans minutes and reports. It was hoped that this model could be built on and rolled out to other depositors according to their knowledge, experience an interest etc.

During the discussion which ensued Members paid tribute to the many volunteers for their valuable contribution in supporting the work of the service.

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

(b) That the valuable contribution to the work of Archive and Heritage Service made by volunteers be acknowledged.

(c) That a review of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive and Heritage Service Volunteer Policy be undertaken and a report on the outcome be brought to their next meeting in November 2018 for consideration.

55. Loans Policy

The Committee considered a Joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Resources – Assistant Chief Executive setting out a proposed new Loans Policy (inward and outward) for adoption by the Service as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Both the Archive and Museum service were both accredited services and as such worked to a set of policies approved by their respective governing bodies ie Archives and Records Associations' Code of Ethics (2016) and Museums Associations' Code of Ethics 2015 respectively. The purpose of these policies was to set out the guiding principles and sector standards for dealing with loans so that there was a consistent approach across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The Conservation Management Plan for the Staffordshire History Centre project included a requirement to review the current policies and align them where possible with the aim of making collections more accessible to a variety of organisations and communities. In addition, the centre was to have its own exhibition space which would be available to receive items on loan from other organisations

During the discussion which ensued an officer representative of the City Council highlighted that the Condition of Loan Agreement relating to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service as set out in the Appendix should also include a similar paragraph on Insurance as set out in the Conditions of Loan Agreement for the County Museum Service. In reply the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to ensure that the necessary amendments were made to the finalised documentation.

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

(b) That the draft Staffordshire Archives and Loans Policy as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be approved for implementation.

(c) That the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities be authorised to make any further minor amendments to the Policy as required, prior to implementation.

56. Date of next meeting - Thursday 15 November 2018 at 10.30 am, Staffordshire County Record Office, Stafford

RESOLVED – That the date of the next meeting be noted.

Chairman