

MINUTES

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee Meeting - 17 June 2010

Present: Ben Adams (Vice-Chairman), Hazel Lyth (Chairman) and Liz Staples

Apologies for absence: Ian Parry and Kath Perry

Also in attendance -

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

(a) **RESOLVED** - That Ms. Hazel Lyth be appointed Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2011.

Ms. Hazel Lyth took the Chair

(b) **RESOLVED** – That Mr. Ben Adams be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2011.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16.5

No declarations at this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2010

Minute number 9 – The Committee noted that Stoke-on-Trent City Council would take the necessary steps to identify an alternate member to represent the City Council on the Committee if Ms Lyth was unavailable.

[**Note by Clerk:** Ross Irving has been named as the substitute Member for Stoke-on-Trent City Council]

Minute number 14 – The Committee were updated on the application for the designation of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service holdings. They noted that eligibility was cleared and that work was in progress on the main application. They were on target to meet the deadline of 27 September 2010. The Head of Community Services offered assistance from the Stoke-on-Trent Museums Service, which has designated status for its collections in their entirety.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Annual Report 2009/10 (Schedule 1)

The Committee considered the Joint Annual Report of the County Council's Director of Communities and Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Communities, Stoke-on-Trent City Council on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the period April 2009 – March 2010.

The Head of the Archive Service indicated that the Annual Report provided an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Services. It demonstrated a productive year for the Joint Archive Service in terms of its performance, achievements and other activity. The most notable successes had been: the Staffordshire Quarter Sessions cataloguing project, funded under the National Cataloguing Grants Scheme; the launch of Staffordshire Name Indexes Online; a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Children on the Move project; and the major 'Discovering the Past' exhibition, mounted at the Nicholson Institute in Leek.

The Service had made good progress in all its core areas of activity: improving access to collections; the public services; cataloguing; learning; preservation; and conservation. It had been a particularly successful year in terms of outreach working with some very positive outcomes for communities. An important new initiative was the implementation of an ongoing survey of records of sports organisations, developed as part of the 2012 Olympics Legacy.

The Committee noted that personal visits and online resources saw a downturn which was a common trend to most archive services, although they noted that new user numbers had been maintained. Members discussed how the service could reverse the downturn in school visiting numbers possibly by using further opportunities for family learning and inter-generational work to support the Adult Social Care and Health agendas.

It was noted that long-forgotten archival material of significant historical interest was still being discovered by chance. An example was the Staffordshire Police records found in a disused boiler room in the old headquarters building in Stafford. These are now with the County Record Office.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Report for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for 2009/10 be received as a record of the performance of the service in the year under review.

[The Chairman agreed to bring forward consideration of the item on Audit Requirements]

5. Audit Requirements (Schedule 2)

The Committee considered a joint report of the County Council's Director of Finance and the City Council's Director of Central Services detailing the process for the audit of the accounts of the Joint Archives Committee, and to consider the management of identified risks within the Joint Archive Service.

The Head of Corporate Finance (County Council) explained to the Committee that under the Audit Commission Act, 1998, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations, 2003, (amended 2009) the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service was defined by the Audit Commission as a separate entity for audit purposes. In 2008 and 2009 an internal audit review of the systems, controls and risks relating to the Joint Committee's accounts was completed in order to comply with Audit Commission regulations.

In 2010 the Committee had moved from the limited assurance regime and, under the Audit Commission's Regulations, now required its own full set of accounts to be completed. The accounts require a full Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities audit, because the Committee's gross expenditure had been over the threshold of £1m for three years. This threshold had been implemented by the Audit Commission. The relevant directors in the two authorities had already agreed to make a joint representation to the Audit Commission on this matter.

The Committee noted that the external costs for the increased level of audit would be in the region of £10,000 and the internal audit costs had been confirmed at £3,000. The requirement to produce full accounts would remain in place as long as the Joint Archive Committee's budget remained over the £1 m threshold. Discussions were taking place between officers of the County and the City to determine how this could be managed in future years.

The Head of Archive Services drew the attention of the Committee to the risks included in the Joint Archive Service's risk register and the actions in place to minimise the risks to the Service.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Audit Requirements report (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes) be received.

(b) That the actions taken by the Joint Archive Service to minimise the impact of identified risks be noted.

6. Annual Corporate Governance Statement and 2009/10 Statement of Accounts and Financial Outturn (Schedule 3)

The Committee considered a joint report of the County Council's Director of Finance and the City Council's Director of Central Services presenting: the Annual Governance Statement; the Statement of Accounts and the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2009/10.

Members were aware that following the requirement to produce a full set of accounts by virtue of turnover exceeding £1m for three consecutive years including 2009/10 there was an additional requirement to produce an Annual Governance Statement which fulfils the Joint Committee's obligation to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. If approved the statement would be incorporated into the Statement of Accounts.

The 2009/10 draft Statement of Accounts had been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, and the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice. The draft accounts would be made available for public inspection from 28 June to 23 July 2010 and the formal audit would commence on 26 July 2010.

The outturn showed that the service had spent £1,115,916 compared with an approved budget of £1,117,277 giving an under spend of £1,361 which was transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year.

The General Reserve had a balance of £135,397, of which the following sums had already been earmarked:-

Alterations/Environmental controls at Stoke	£30,000
Adaptations for new outstore (if required)	£50,000
Continuation of microfilming programme for Staffordshire electoral registers	£8,000

The current balance on the second reserve (the Archive Acquisition Reserve) was £65,859 and this was held to enable the Archive Service to purchase collections for the benefit of archive users in County and City.

RESOLVED – (a) That the 2009/10 Governance Statement, Appendix 1 of Schedule 3 to the signed minutes, be approved.

(b) That the draft Statement of Accounts for 2009-2010, Appendix 2 of Schedule 3 to the signed minutes, be approved.

(c) That the reported outturn position be noted.

7. Digital Archive Collections: Preservation and Access (Schedule 4)

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Communities and Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Communities informing them of progress made towards provision by the Joint Archive Service for the future preservation of born digital archives and for future public access to them.

Records, especially those of public bodies which are eventually deposited with the Joint Archive Service under legislation, were increasingly being created in digital format. The long-term preservation of these records and ensuring that the public can continue to access them in the future presents an important challenge for the Service.

In preparation for this, in 2007 the Joint Archive Service developed a digital archive policy and strategy. This set out a framework to work towards establishing formal arrangements for the secure storage and proper management of born digital archives. Significant progress had been made in the last three years.

Work had been completed on defining protocols and procedures for the receipt and accessioning of deposited digital archives. In addition, the Archive Service had now

reached a major and significant milestone, in having established a digital archive repository, with the provision of secure server space for the storage of archives in electronic format. Work was continuing on establishing public access protocols which would be compliant with the County Council and City Council's ICT security requirements. The Assistant ICT Manager, (Directorate for Children, Families and Young People, County Council) expanded on the technical background.

Members expressed their concerns and discussed the challenges of ensuring that material in digital format was not lost for the future. It was suggested and agreed that this should be added to the Joint Archive Service risk register.

RESOLVED - (a) That the actions taken to date in establishing arrangements for the future preservation of deposited digital archive collections be noted.

(b) That discussions continue to take place to identify the long-term funding implications for archive collections in digital format.

8. Date of next meeting - 22 November 2010 (Stafford)

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Monday 22 November 2010 at 10.30 am at the County Records Office, Stafford.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.