

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 13 June 2019

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Report

Recommendation(s)

1. That this report informing the Committee about the annual report on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service for the period April 2018 to March 2019 is received and approved.
2. The Risk Register for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service is reviewed and agreed.
3. The revisions to the Service Charter are approved.

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 accompanying Annual Report provides an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year, April 2018 to March 2019. The internal audit carried out on the Joint Archive Committee in 2018 recommended that the Committee review the Risk Register for the service annually. The Service has also reviewed the charter for its service standards.

Background

4. The terms of the Joint Agreement for Archive Services between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council requires an annual report on the work of the Joint Archive Service to be brought to the Annual Meeting in June. The Annual Report also provides the means by which the Committee can be presented with a full overview of the range of activities, progress and performance of the Service.

5. The year 2018-2019 was the first in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. This year's Annual Report shows some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2018-2021. These objectives are:

- Developing an active partnership approach.
- Delivering resilience and sustainability.
- Reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences.

- Sharing knowledge across the UK.
- Increasing our online presence and remote access.

6. The year was a mixture of successes but also disappointment. The key highlights were:

- Opening the new Lichfield History Access point in December 2018 which has welcomed lots of new visitors.
- Completing the Doulton Described project opening up access to this important collection.
- The conclusion the WW1 centennial commemorations with a very successful project to digitize the Jake Whitehouse collection.
- Achieving a step change in digital preservation through participation in the Archives West Midlands regional project and acquiring the Preservica system.
- Securing funding for the County Asylums project from the Wellcome Trust
- Securing funding for the Bawdy Courts project from the Archives Revealed grant.
- Maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and numbers of compliments.
- Sustaining attendance levels to events, talks and group visits.

7. The major disappointment was the rejection of the round 2 Heritage Lottery Application for the Staffordshire History Centre project in September 2018. However the team successfully regrouped to present new plans and gain support from the Joint Committee and Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet to try again for funding in 2019.

8. The Archive and Heritage Service collects detailed statistics about all areas of its work shown at Appendix 1 to the report. This covers personal use, distance use and online use of the service. There are five local performance indicators which the service measures against:

1. Use of the service
2. Attendances at events, talks, education and community visits
3. Volunteer hours
4. Customer satisfaction
5. Collecting activity

9. During 2018/2019 the service has seen falls in the use of the service (both personal and online). The decline in personal visits is by 15% continuing a national trend across archive services. The service encourages users to access material which has been digitized and online through Find My Past or Ancestry.com. Online use has also seen a dip although this is partly explained by a change in the collection of data for the online catalogue which resulted in a drop of 68%. Together this meant a 6% drop in overall use of the service.

10 By contrast attendances at events rose by 3% as the service continued its policy of ensuring a presence at community and village events across the county. This was piloted during the Staffordshire History Centre project development phase.

11. Volunteer hours were also significantly down by 26% from a very high level in 2017/2018. This was due to an increased amount of volunteer hours during the Staffordshire History Centre project development phase. As the bid was unsuccessful in September some volunteer projects were unable to progress. New projects such as the Asylum and Bawdy Courts should see an increase in hours in the current financial year.

12. Customer satisfaction was back up to 100% having remained consistently high. The highest scores are always for the quality of staff advice and helpfulness and friendliness.

13. Collecting activity was slightly down by 2.5% but remained in line with the previous year and does fluctuate.

14. Overall the service had a good year despite the disappointment of the Staffordshire History Centre funding application. Other externally funded projects were able to make a good start with promising outcomes for the future. The opening of the History Access Point was the culmination of two years of planning and has so far exceeded expectations.

Risk Register

15. Staffordshire County Council Internal Audit team completed an audit of the Joint Archive Committee in May 2018 and recommended the committee review the risk register. The Risk Register sets out the main risks to the service covering:

- Physical risks to collections
- Risks to digital collections
- Risks to staff, members of the public and volunteers within the service
- Risks to operation of the public service
- Risks to forward planning for the service

The register at Appendix 3 sets out the impacts and mitigating actions giving a total risk rating out of 25. Last year the highest risk item was digital preservation of collections. Since then by working with Archives West Midlands and acquiring the Preservica digital preservation system the risk has been partly mitigated and reduced from 20 to 15.

Service Charter

16. The Archive Service first introduced a service charter in 1998 as part of its work to meet the Chartermark customer service standard. The charter has not been reviewed for a number of years nor has it been updated to include the Heritage Service.

17. The Archive and Heritage management team have reviewed the charter and have updated it to include the Heritage Service. Since the closure of Lichfield Record Office and the move of collections in 2018 the service has seen a significant rise in advance production of documents as items are retrieved from the out store. The

service also encourages advance production for Saturday mornings at Staffordshire Record Office. This means the proportion of same day production is less and monitoring the 20 minute production time does not reflect the use of the service. The 20 minute target has been removed and it is recommended that staff time is not spent on monitoring the smaller quantity of same day requests.

18. It is recommended that the changes in the charter at Appendix 4 are approved by the committee.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

This report has been prepared in accordance with the personnel and equal opportunities' policies of the County Council and the City Council.

Legal implications:

The work of the Archive Service is governed by the Joint Agreement and other legislation to allow both authorities to meet their legal obligations.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The Archive Service delivers a range of work which is measured in a number of ways and detailed in the appendices of the Annual Report.

Risk implications:

Risk register for the service has been completed.

Climate Change implications:

None applicable

Health Impact Assessment screening:

None applicable

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Annual Report 2018-2019	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370
Archive Service Risk Register 2018	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370