

**STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE
24 FEBRUARY 2011**

**JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR PLACE AND DEPUTY CHIEF
EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

**STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT ARCHIVE SERVICE:
AWARD OF CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARD**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the successful outcome of the recent assessment of the Joint Archive Service against the Customer Service Excellence Standard and to consider the ongoing commitment of the Joint Archive Service to maintaining the Standard

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Joint Archive Service was externally assessed against the Customer Service Excellence Standard in December 2010. As a result of this assessment, the Service was judged to meet the Standard and awarded the Standard in January 2011.
- 2.2 This is a major achievement and marks a continuous record of achievement by the Joint Archive Service in standards of excellence in public service, which has resulted in a series of successive awards and external recognition between 1998 and 2008.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard to the Joint Archive Service in January 2011 be noted.
- 3.2 That the Joint Committee endorses the continuing commitment of the Joint Archive Service to Customer Service Excellence.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Customer Service Excellence is the Government's standard for excellence in public service, administered through the Cabinet Office. It replaced the former Charter Mark quality standard in 2008.
- 4.2 The following are the main criteria for the Standard:
- Customer insight which focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of customers, including customer identification, consultation, monitoring outcomes and customer satisfaction.

- Organisational culture which focuses on the development of a customer focused culture and includes elements on leadership, policy and staff professionalism and attitude
- Information and access which examines communications policy, the range and quality of information, accessible services, partnership and co-operative working
- Delivery which includes main service aims, service outcomes and addressing problems in delivery
- Timeliness and quality of service which focuses on the most important factors of excellent customer service including in-depth examination of service standards and delivery

Within these five main criteria there are a further 57 sub-criteria.

- 4.3 In 1998 and 2001 the Staffordshire Record Office was awarded Charter Marks for excellence in public service. In 2004 and 2007 the Joint Archive Service as a whole (Staffordshire Record Office, Stoke-on-Trent City Archives and Lichfield Record Office) was assessed against the enhanced Charter Mark Standard and judged as meeting it. This accreditation lasted for the three years to 2010. During this interim period, the Charter Mark Standard was replaced by the new Customer Service Excellence Standard.
- 4.4 Between 2008 and 2010 the Joint Archive Service has been working on the transition to the Customer Service Excellence Standard. The most recent assessment of the Service against the Standard in December 2010 was undertaken in two stages. The first was an external review of a detailed self assessment, supported by relevant evidence. The second stage was an on-site assessment by an external assessor to obtain further evidence from staff, partners, service users and senior management.
- 4.5 As a result of the assessment the Service achieved full compliance in 55 out of the 57 sub-criteria in the Standard. There were only two areas of partial compliance. These relate to improved methods of measuring customer satisfaction and canvassing customer views on fairness of service delivery.
- 4.6 The assessor's report has noted that "the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service was found to have a deep understanding and a commitment to Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was found from senior management levels through to operation and front line staff". The assessor noted the following areas of good practice: dedication of leadership management and staff to the ethos of customer care; the particularly high quality of customer focus, with customers citing many examples of staff "going the extra mile" to ensure customer satisfaction; the quality and range of information and access; the strong commitment to community outreach work; the appreciation of volunteers for the friendly customer caring culture that they found in the service; and the Service's strong national performance as a four star archive service.
- 4.7 Customer Service Excellence is a challenging standard to meet especially for a small service. We anticipate that, in the medium term, maintaining compliance with the Standard will be difficult owing to the current financial climate where staffing levels and budgets are reducing.

- 4.8 However, because the Standard is very clearly focused on putting the customer at the heart of the organisation, it supports the County Council's and the City Council's core value of customer and citizen focus. There is no doubt that working towards meeting the Standard has resulted in a high quality, customer-focused public service for Archive Service users in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Service has been able to demonstrate consistent and continuous improvement over a long period, not just in terms of its service for onsite users but also for distance users and for people in local communities, where outreach work is focused. There is no doubt that the Joint Archive Service is delivering better outcomes as a result of its Customer Service Excellence work. This work has also contributed to the Joint Archive Service's position nationally in the top quartile of local authority archive services. Its profile among users is high. One service user, who travels some distance to use the service commented during the recent assessment that it was "undoubtedly the preferred record office of a number nationally which she visited".

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The total estimated costs to the Joint Archive Service for its Customer Service Excellence assessments over the three financial years 2011-2014 are £3,350. This will place some pressure on existing budgets.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Customer Service Excellence Standard includes positive action to identify of hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and the development of services to meet the needs of these groups.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The identified criteria to meet the Customer Service Excellence Standard complies with the law governing the work of the Joint Archive Service.

Catherine Raines, Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive
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Background Documents: Report of Customer Service Excellence assessment for the Joint Archive Service, January 2011

Customer Service Excellence Standard, 2008

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