

Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee meeting held on 11 November 2021

Present: Mike Davies (Invitee/Observer), Mark Sutton, Lorraine Beardmore and Victoria Wilson

PART ONE

8. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

9. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

10. Predicted Outturn 2021/22

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Corporate Services (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) setting out:- (i) the predicted net revenue outturn budget position at 2021/22 year end and; (ii) the anticipated reserves balance at 2021/22 year end (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

Members noted that the Joint Archive Service was estimated to break even. Core Services had a projected overspend of £1,177 (which included a £2,889 transfer to reserves) whereas Sites and Public Services for both the County and City Councils had underspends of £177 and £1,000 respectively.

The forecast combined balance in three reserves was projected to amount to £193,315 comprising:- (i) General Reserve - £125,472; (ii) Acquisition Reserve - £57,542 and; (iii) Art Fund Grant – Minton - £10,301, ie approximately £241,000.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. Review of Fees and Charges

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) setting out the proposed fees and charges for introduction by the Joint Archive and Heritage Service from 1 April 2022 (schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The Service's scheme of Fees and charges had been reviewed on an annual basis since 1997. For 2022/23 financial year it was proposed that charges for

the Supply of Copies and fees for Talks and Visits remained unchanged owing to the increases which had been implemented during 2021/22. In addition, the charges made for Talks and Visits, Reproduction Fees and Group Visits were also recommended to remain unchanged. However, it was proposed that the Research Fee should be increased from £32.00 to £36.00 per hour.

RESOLVED – That the fees and charges proposed in Appendix 2 of this report be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive and Heritage Service from 1 April 2022.

12. Staffordshire History Centre Project - Update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on progress with regard to the Staffordshire History Centre project (schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

Members were informed that since their previous meeting, a grant of £3.9 million had been awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards construction of the Staffordshire History Centre. In addition, permission to commence work had been received on the 8 November 2021.

During their presentation of the report the Deputy Chief Executive and Director highlighted:- (i) the project Governance Structure for the Delivery Phase; (ii) a (provisional) timeline of key decisions for Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the delivery phase of the project and; (iii) proposed new branding for the Centre.

Members noted the four workstreams in the Delivery Phase ie:- (i) Operation Change and Business Plan; (ii) Activity and Interpretation Plans; (iii) Fundraising and (iv) New Building and that Progress reports were to be presented to the Project Board and the Joint Committee at regular intervals. They also noted that the existing Staffordshire Record Office was to close temporarily in March 2022 to enable preparatory surveys to be undertaken. During this time staff would be re-located to temporary accommodation and access to collections would be limited.

During the discussion which ensued Members paid tribute to the work of the Deputy Chief Executive, Director and their Staff for their excellent work in achieving a successful bid enabling the project to proceed. They looked forward to its completion and requested that any slippage against the timelines identified be reported to them as soon as possible so that appropriate remedial measures could be undertaken, as necessary.

The Member representative of Stoke-on-Trent City Council referred to the impending relocation of the City Archive Service and said that it was important the proposed new branding fitted with her Authority's plans for the move. Therefore, she requested that the Committee defer a decision on the branding until a future meeting to enable further consideration of the matter by the City Council. In reply, the Deputy Chief Executive said that whilst a wholesale re-design of the logos would be difficult at this stage, the County Council could accommodate minor adjustments, to take account of changing circumstances at Stoke.

RESOLVED – (a) That the timeline for the Staffordshire History Centre project key decisions set out in the report be noted.

(b) That further discussions be held with Stoke-on-Trent City Council regarding new branding for the Staffordshire History Centre to ensue it fitted pending the move of their Archives Service.

13. Pandemic War Diary Project

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on progress with regard to the Pandemic 'War Diary' Project which was being funded through Central Government's Covid-19 Grant (schedule 4 to the signed minutes).

Members were informed that project had three aims ie:- (i) to capture the official record of Staffordshire County Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic for transfer to the Archive and Heritage Service as a resource for future research; (ii) to undertake an oral history project to capture the experiences of Staffordshire County Council Members and Officers during the pandemic; (iii) to produce a publicly accessible brochure to share the story of how the Authority managed their response and to create a legacy.

Members noted a freelance historian was to be commissioned to work alongside a Project Assistant for the oral history project. In addition, items for donation to the Archive were being identified through the 'Lockdown Memories' project (an exhibition of which would be held during March 2022) and an appeal for volunteers to take part in the oral history project had generated over 140 items responses to date.

During the discussion which ensued Members welcomed the significant progress which had been made in the project to date.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

14. Wellcome Trust Asylums Project

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them of progress with regard to the 'A Case for the Ordinary' Asylums project (schedule 5 to the signed minutes).

The project, which had begun in January 2019 following receipt of £196,469 grant aid from the Wellcome Trust, aimed to improve access to the Staffordshire Asylums collections by:- (i) creating a dataset of historic patient information for academic research about Staffordshire's asylum patients using Asylum collections; (ii) engaging with the public, including volunteer about the history of mental health in the County through a blog and exhibition; (iii) building on the Services' academic partnerships and engage with academic researchers and; (iv) securing match funding for the Staffordshire History Centre Project.

Members noted that to date, over 38,000 records had been extracted from collections. An online index for pre-1920 open records had been prepared and would be made available on-line later in 2021. In addition, a redacted dataset of pre-1948 records had been trialled by academics and would be advertised alongside the exhibition launch in January 2022.

The Staffordshire Asylums blog was to be made available to the public throughout the life of the project until 2022. Since April 2020 the blog site had received 11,831 visits and 15,845 page views.

During the discussion which ensued Members welcomed the significant progress which had been made in the project to date.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

15. Date of next meeting - Thursday 24 February 2022 at 10.30 am, venue to be confirmed

RESOLVED – That the date, time and venue of the next meeting be noted.

16. 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 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972 indicated below.

PART TWO

17. Relocation of Stoke-on-Trent City Archives - Update

(exemption paragraph 2 and 4)

The Committee noted an exempt joint oral report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on the relocation of Stoke-on-Trent Archives Service.

Chairman