

Local Members Interest
N/A

**Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive
Committee
Tuesday 27 February 2024**

Stoke-on-Trent City Archives Move Update

Recommendation(s)

- a. That the committee note the progress update for the project.

Report of Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations:

The Joint Archives Committee was updated on progress of the project at the meeting on 2nd August 2023 (Annual Report). This report brings an update on progress of the project.

Background

1. The original timescale for the move was for Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (SOTCA) open in the new location in the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (PMAG) in May/June 2023. This would have given the Team time to survey the collections and package only.
2. It was realised that the timescale was lengthening and the decision was taken to make the move project a once in a generation opportunity to:
 - a. Appraise the Archive, Local studies Library and Ceramics Library collections.
 - b. Plan projects to deliver for the future.
 - c. Continue to deliver our core services as far as possible.

Key Areas of Work During Move Project

3. This report covers the key areas of work during this period.
4. Core services continued:
 - a. Continued the remote public service throughout and facilitated onsite visits where urgent for Stoke-on-Trent City Council

- (SOTCC) staff and others. This has been praised by The National Archives (TNA) as a best-practice model.
- b. Continued to carry out site visits to assess archives collections at immediate risk; and advised local groups about their archives.
 - c. New collections accepted and processed where there was an immediate risk of loss.
 - d. Cataloguing has not been prioritised. However, all local studies books are now on the online catalogue.
5. Benefits of continuing core services:
- a. Service users have still been able to access our service remotely using the online catalogue and the enquiry, copying and research services.
 - b. We have maintained our relationship with our customers in a really positive way despite the closure. We have had no complaints and lots of positive feedback during this period.
6. All collections surveyed, appraised and with a presence online:
- a. Surveyed the entire archive collection to ascertain packaging requirements and immediate conservation intervention needs.
 - b. Appraised and weeded the Local Studies Library book, pamphlet, map, photographic and print collections and the Ceramic Library; and prepared disposal reports for Stoke-on-Trent City Council Cabinet.
 - c. Appraised and accessioned or transferred all un-accessioned archives.
 - d. Added a collection description to the online catalogue for the 688 archive collections that are not yet catalogued. Now all 1102 Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (SOTCA) collections have a collection description online.
7. The benefits of the survey and appraisal projects:
- a. It is best practice to have all archives wrapped/boxed.
 - b. Documents are now safe to move without risk of damage.
 - c. Levels of harmful particles (from red rot and dust to mould) in the stores have been eliminated; and risk of spread of mould mitigated.
 - d. The risks posed by water ingress in the new stores has been mitigated (this is a requirement for Archive Service Accreditation).
 - e. Space has been saved.
 - f. We are now a model of best practice for archival storage.
8. Recruited and trained volunteers for the move project:
- a. A small young team has been trained and in return we have supported them in their careers.

- b. Former staff as volunteers have helped identify and list local studies collection.
 - c. The packaging project could not have been completed without this small efficient team of enthusiastic volunteers.
9. Developed our digital presence and services:
 - a. Created the Stoke Archives is Moving microsite (www.stokearchivesismoving.uk).
 - b. Added new online indexes to collections to increase public access to specific sources.
 - c. All archive collections and local studies books now have an online presence. This has widened access to collections.
 - d. Continued our social media posting and development of the Minton Archive website (www.themintonarchive.org.uk).
 - e. Benefits of the digital development project are that we have kept our existing customers informed about progress in a positive way helping us to pre-empt possible complaints about restriction of services and changes to services going forward.
10. Staff development and training:
 - a. We have continued to develop staff through targeted training for the move project including box making and mould identification and treatment (sessions run by the Joint Archive Service conservator); fire warden training and manual handling training for all staff.
 - b. Our 18-month part-time temporary member of staff has been successful in gaining a place on an Archive MA course.
 - c. Our archivist designed a widening access project. She has converted the Local Studies collection card catalogue into an online catalogue (15,440 individual catalogue entries).
 - d. Benefit/purpose is that staff have been trained to deliver the move project in a safe and efficient manner; staff feel valued and have remained positive about the project.
11. Planning our new reading room and archives workrooms:
 - a. Workflows examined and adapted for the new building to account for the reduction in space and distance of available space from store and reading room.
 - b. Digital plans for all our work area drawn up by our digital development officer for the project team to use in allocating space at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (PMAG).
 - c. Furniture needs assessment carried out.
 - d. Furniture sourced from City Central Library disposals.
 - e. Approval has been given for use of the reserve to support removal costs to transfer the collections from one site to the new site. Estimated costs for this are over £26,000. In addition, approval

has also been given for use of the reserve for £10,300 to replace old and unsafe microfilm cabinets and for the purchase of frames for six photographs of each of the six towns from the Bentley Photographic Collection to be displayed within the new Reading Room area. The total amount approved for use of the reserve is c£37,000.

- f. Images from the Bentley Photographic Collection have been selected to be presented in a digital online public vote, to enable the public to choose their favourite images of each of the six towns. The chosen images will be printed, framed and displayed within the new Reading Room area.
- g. Benefit/purpose is to provide clarity to the project team about service requirements; opportunity to re-examine processes.

13. Next Steps

- a. Complete sourcing of remaining reading room furniture.
- b. Pack Local studies and Ceramic Libraries.
- c. Finalise strong room shelving layout with shelving supplier Bruynzeel and assess implications for the move.
- d. Complete physical move preparation.
- e. Move collections.
- f. Move staff furniture and equipment.
- g. Plan and deliver reopening events.

Legal Implications

The relocation of Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (SoTCA) is being managed in accordance with Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Service's policies and Archive Service Accreditation standard.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

The project is funded by Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SOTCC). The relocation of Stoke-on-Trent City Archives (SOTCA) will enable better care and access to the City Council's Archive collections through newly converted purpose-built storage, reading room and preservation room. Procurement of goods and services for the project complies with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's (SOTCC) procurement framework.

Climate Change Implications

The Project has re-used an existing building, used energy efficient solutions within the strong rooms and reused furniture from the former City Central Library.

List of Documents/Appendices:**Background**

N/A

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