

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 23 February 2012**

Present: Pat Corfield (Chairman), Gwen Hassall (Vice-Chairman) and Liz Staples (Substitute)

Apologies for absence: Ian Parry and Simon Tagg

PART ONE

15. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

No declarations at this meeting.

16. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2011 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

17. Annual Implementation Plan, 2011-12: Predicted Outturn

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services detailing the predicted outturn against the targets set in Joint Archive Service's Annual Implementation Plan for 2011-2012.

The year 2011-2012 had been one of transition and change as new staffing structures and changes to opening hours had been implemented. This has had some affect on the performance outturn as the Service had adapted to these changes. However overall the performance of the Service had been maintained at previous high levels with some targets being exceeded compared to last year's outturn. Members noted a number of highlights and key achievements throughout the year detailed in the report. They noted that, as there were no national performance indicators, the Archive Service reported against local indicators and the predicted outturn against those targets. This year there had been no National Archives self-assessment as work was now underway to develop a new Archives Accreditation Scheme led by the National Archives.

The Committee noted that the Archive Services was only the third County to receive Designated Status, which was a great achievement for the Service.

The Archive Service Implementation Plan had seven outcomes which set the vision for the Service from 2009 – 2012. The Key achievements against each outcome were: (i) the customer is at the heart of service delivery; (ii) an innovative online presence which showcases Staffordshire's archives; (iii) engagement with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their identity and place; (iv) engagement with people of all ages in activities which celebrate and discover Staffordshire's history; (v) a well managed and high performing service; (vi) improving and promoting user access to Staffordshire's archive collections; and (vii) delivering high quality care of Staffordshire's archive collections.

Members noted the detail of performance to local indicators showing personal use of the Archive Service and online use had seen falls in visits to the main website which could be linked to falls in onsite visits as people access the site in connection with a visit. However they noted visits to other online resources and the online catalogue had seen increases (up 32%/29% respectively).

Following a query about the Staffordshire Hoard the Chairman was informed about the Mercian Trail and a bid for National Lottery funding, to develop a touring community exhibition to explain the significance of the Hoard to a wider audience. The Head of Archive Services also reported on the current situation regarding the Wedgwood Collection and informed the Committee of the support given so far by the County Council and City Council.

The Chairman suggested that there was a review of the indicators to meet the modern service and include a new usage figure to provide a more accurate reflection of the work delivered by the Archive Service. The review should also include an indicator to show the level and effect of community engagement work by the Archive Service. He also asked that the Committee's thanks be passed to the staff for the excellent work done.

RESOLVED – that the report be received as a record of the predicted performance of the Joint Archive Service for the year ending 31 March 2012.

18. Predicted Outturn 2011/12 and Proposed Revenue Budget 2012/13

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Finance and Resources and the City Director of Business Services detailing the current predicted outturn for 2011/12 for the Joint Archive Service and to consider the budget position for 2012/13.

Members noted that the latest revenue outturn forecast showed an anticipated underspend of £13,997 at the end of the financial year. The current balance on the General Reserve was £96,204 of which £55,000 had already been earmarked. The Committee were asked to approve the earmarking of £55,000 towards alterations and environmental controls at Stoke.

The Archive Acquisition Reserve had a balance of £63,814 towards the purchase of new collections.

Members noted that the proposed revenue budget for 2012/13 of £660,550 had increased by 8.8% when compared to estimate for the current year.

Under the Joint Archive Agreement the total cost of the service was currently apportioned between the two authorities 77.56% (County) and 22.44% (City), based on the June 2008 population estimates for the County and the City. It was proposed to revise the apportionment of revenue costs to reflect the latest available respective population levels as at June 2010. This would increase the percentage charge to the County Council to 77.59% for 2012/13, with a corresponding decrease in the City Council's percentage share to 22.41%. The proposed revenue budget had been apportioned on this basis and the County's proposed share of the costs is £512,520 and the City's £148,030. Both authorities have sufficient budgetary provision to meet these costs.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the sum of £55,000 be earmarked from the General Reserve to cover alterations and environmental controls at Stoke.

(c) That the revenue budget proposed for 2012/13 be approved and submitted to the County Council for consideration.

19. Forward Plan 2012-2015

The Committee received a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services detailing the new three year Forward Plan. It was noted that the Archive Service continues to work towards outcomes set over a three year period to support delivery to corporate outcomes and also to meet national accreditation schemes.

The Joint Archive Service had worked to a three year planning cycle since its inception in 1997. The scope of this sixth plan had extended to include the Heritage Service (County Museum Service) which became part of Archives and Heritage in December 2011. This report will focus on the Joint Archive Service work although inevitably there is cross over between the two. The Committee noted the vision for the service for next three years was - *To deliver a vibrant archive and heritage offer for Staffordshire's people, places, communities and its visitors.*

Members noted that the eight outcomes for the new plan were:- (i) an integrated onsite and online customer experience; (ii) an innovative online presence which showcases Staffordshire's collections; (iii) engagement with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their identity and place; (iv) celebration and discovery of Staffordshire's history; (v) a sustainable and high performing service which provides leadership for the Archive and Heritage sector; (vi) improving and promoting user access to Staffordshire's collections; (vii) delivering high quality care of Staffordshire's collections; and (viii) extended volunteer working in Archives and Heritage providing opportunities for people to increase their skills and help support access to collections.

The Committee noted that the Archive Service had seen a reduction in its resources over the last three years and the new plan took account of this. However it was still ambitious and clearly partnership working, use of volunteers and investment in current staff would be vital to effective delivery. Working across Archives and Heritage as one service would help to make the best use of available resources. By utilising the new opening hours effectively the Service would be able to build on its work in the community to extend this and deliver a vibrant archive and heritage offer within the county and city.

Members also noted that the service would see the delivery of online access to key family history sources by commissioning a commercial partner, in the next three years. It was intended that this would widen access and generate income but would also allow the service to focus on the user experience in other ways.

RESOLVED – that the report on the Forward Plan 2012-2015, be received.

20. Digitisation of key family history collections

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services giving details of the proposed digitisation of the key family history collections.

The Joint Archive Service had been preserving archive collections and making them available for public access in a variety of ways for over 65 years. The heavy user demand for access to family history resources had meant that these collections had previously been microfilmed to provide a surrogate so that originals could be preserved and allow access from several service points around the county and city. There was increasing demand to view these resources online through commercial family history websites such as Ancestry.com and Find My Past. This trend was initiated by the National Archives over ten years ago when the 1901 census was published online and they had continued to develop their online service. The government policy, Archives for the 21st Century, encourages local authority archive services to do the same.

The Committee noted the reasons that the Joint Archive Service should pursue this project include:

- World wide access to the Archive Service's most heavily used collections
- Generation of income to help support the care of these archives
- Meeting user demand for online access
- Enables the Service to devote more time to developing work with communities to raise awareness of archives that relate to their place and raise pride in their local heritage
- Ensures Staffordshire is not left behind as other archive services deliver access online in this way (London Metropolitan Archives, Dorset History Centre, Liverpool, Manchester, Warwickshire and Cheshire are amongst services which have already launched their content online).
- Meeting objectives of the government policy on Archives

The Committee noted that the scope of the project would cover digitisation of the most heavily used and name rich sources for family history. Archive Service had been working on ensuring that permissions for the use of the original material were required and the Legal Services team had been working on the Proposal Document with the Archive Service using a model document from Dorset History Centre. It was intended that this proposal would be completed by April 2012 with a view to inviting commercial family history companies to bid against the proposal to become the partner in this project in May. Estimated timescales were completion of contract details by mid summer ready to start digitisation in late summer/early autumn. The digitisation process could take about 9-12 months depending on how it was carried out.

RESOLVED – (a) that the report on the project to digitise the key family history collections be received.

(b) that the Joint Archive Service commission a commercial partner to deliver the project as a partnership.

21. Date of next meeting - 21 June 2012

RESOLVED – that the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee would take place on Thursday 21 June 2012 at 10.30 am at the Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH.

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.