

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 21 June 2012**

Present: Pat Corfield (Vice-Chairman), Liz Staples (Substitute) and
Janine Bridges (Chairman)

Apologies for absence: Ian Parry and Jeremy Oates

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice- Chairman

The Committee noted changes to the Stoke-on-Trent City Council representative and welcomed Dr. Janine Bridges to the meeting. The City Council also confirmed Mrs. Gwen Hassall, as substitute, to represent the City Council in the event that Dr. Bridges was unavailable, but would only assume voting rights in her absence.

(a) **RESOLVED** - That Dr. Janine Bridges be appointed Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2013.

Dr. Janine Bridges took the Chair

(b) **RESOLVED** – That Mr. Pat Corfield be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2013.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

None at this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2012

The Head of Archive Services referred to minute number 20 and asked whether the Committee would want to refer the decision to commission a commercial partner as a partner, to deliver the digitisation of the key family history project, to the relevant Scrutiny Committees of both Councils. The Chairman asked that the Head of Archive Services seek advice from the Legal Services of the two authorities.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2012 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Services: Annual Report 2011/12

The Committee considered the joint Annual Report of the County Council's Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes), on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service for the period April 2011 – March 2012.

The Committee noted that 2011-2012 was the third in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. The year's Annual Report showed both positive

achievements and steady progress towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2009-2012. These objectives were: (i) to put the customer at the heart of service delivery; (ii) to build upon our innovative online presence; (iii) to engage with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their sense of identity and place; (iv) to engage people of all ages in activities which celebrate and discover Staffordshire's history; (v) to continue to build a well-managed and high performing service; (vi) to improve and promote user access to collections; and (vii) to deliver high quality care of our irreplaceable archive collections.

The Annual Report demonstrates a productive year for the Joint Archive Service in terms of its performance, achievements and associated activity. The most notable successes had been: achievement of the Designation Award; full compliance with the Customer Service Excellence Standard; completing the Children on the Move Project funded by Heritage Lottery Fund; the Out of Darkness Exhibition; continuing to meet Service targets with reduced staffing; and moving into our new outstore to enable the continued expansion of our collections.

The Committee noted the public service statistics detailed in the report. They also noted that the Joint Archive Service produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and achieved a 99% customer satisfaction rating in its local Customer Survey. Overall it was a successful year for the Service and they continue to meet high standards whilst also implementing significant changes. The Chairman asked that the Committee's thanks be passed to the staff for all their work and commitment, and she thanked the Head of the Archive Service for a professional and well presented report.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Report for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for 2011/12 be received as a record of the performance of the service in the year under review.

5. Revised Local Performance Indicators

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Corporate Director and Director for Place and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes) detailing proposed revisions to the Local Performance Indicators.

At the last Joint Archive Committee on 23 February 2012 the Committee requested a revision to the Local Performance Indicators to update them so that they reflected the range of work that the Joint Archive Service undertakes. The revision also took into account the current priorities of the two local authorities. The Committee noted that the Joint Archive Service set its own local performance indicators as there were no national indicators for local authority archive services. These performance indicators had been in place since 2003 without significant change.

The Archive Service had changed significantly since 2003 seeing a rise in online use against falling onsite visitor numbers, an increase in the use of volunteers, and more outreach and events delivered onsite as well as within local communities. The focus of the Archive Service was changing as it sought to digitise key collections for family history with a commercial partner and it was therefore timely to review the current performance indicators.

The proposed indicators retain the customer satisfaction rating and collecting activity as key areas which the Archive Service still sees as a priority. There was a new indicator which wraps up onsite, online and remote services as Use of the Archive Service. This included: personal visits; online visits for all Archive Service websites; enquiries (postal, email, telephone); and remote services (photocopying, research services). The Archive Service was seeking to develop new online content to explain and interpret its collections as well as digitising archive sources with a commercial partner.

There were two other new indicators for Attendances at Events and Volunteer Hours; this represented Engagement with the Archive Service. This was a growing area of use for the Service and an area which supported the local community, helps skill people to promote growth in jobs and prosperity and ensures people have a range of cultural and learning activities which they can access and enjoy. As this supports the priorities of both authorities it was appropriate to include them as performance indicators.

RESOLVED – that the revised Local Performance Indicators detailed in Appendix 2 to Schedule 2 to the signed minutes be approved.

6. Additional fees and charges 2012-2013

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director for Place and Deputy Corporate Director and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services proposing addition fees and charges for specific service requests (Schedule 3 to the signed minutes). At the last Joint Archive Committee on 7 December 2011 the Committee approved the fees and charges for the Service from April 2012. Since these fees were approved the Archive Service had received an increasing number of requests for support, advice and training for local history and community groups in connection with applications for grant funding. This had prompted the Archive Service to review its charges again.

The Archive Service receives requests from community groups to advise them about applications for grant funding for local projects. These projects often involve collecting archives, photographs, artefacts and oral history testimonies. Sometimes the project may also include outreach elements such as exhibitions, events or creating a time capsule.

The Service offers support in several ways. It can offer advice about the bid application and a letter of support may also be written. The other way that the Service supports local groups is at the delivery stage of the project by offering training or workshops for the people involved in the project. A recent example is the Chesterton My Place youth project where two members of staff delivered a session on oral history techniques and what to put into a time capsule.

Until now all of this support had been given free of charge. However there was evidence that other Archive Services and related cultural services charge for this support and that funders such as Heritage Lottery Fund expect this service to be charged for. The proposed charges had been based on the in-kind charge that the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council recommend for professional advice. Both bodies welcome bids which were supported by organisations such as the Archive Service as it strengthened the bid and ensured that the end product reaches a certain standard. The charge would be

made for the workshop session and this could be included as part of the bid for funding by the community group

The proposed fees and charges would only be applied from this point on to ensure that community groups had time to include them as part of their application for funding. Advice at the bid writing stage would still be given free of charge. Advice to other community groups who are not seeking funding would still be given free of charge as part of the basic service provided to potential depositors and organisations who care for collections.

To ensure parity across services these fees include those sessions delivered by Staffordshire County Museum Service.

RESOLVED – That the additional fees and charges detailed in Appendix 2 to Schedule 3 to the signed minutes, be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from June 2012.

7. Joint Archive Service - Outturn 2011/12

The Committee considered a joint report of the County Council's Director of Finance and Resources and the City Director of Central Services presenting the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2011/12 (Schedule 4 to the signed minutes).

The outturn showed that the service had spent £577,814 compared with an approved budget of £607,090 giving an underspend of £29,276 which was transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. The General Reserve had a balance of £113,268 of which £42,788 had already been earmarked for alterations and environmental controls at Stoke. It was noted that the Archives Service was due an inspection of its depositories.

The Archive Acquisition Reserve had a balance of £63,814 towards the purchase of new collections for the benefit of archive users in the County and City. The Committee were reminded that the Joint Archives Committee was required to complete a Small Bodies in England Annual return for the year ended 2012 and this had been completed and was available for the Chairman to sign, when approved.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received;

(b) That approval be given for the Chairman to sign the completed Small Bodies Return for submission.

8. Date of next meeting - 22 November 2012

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday 22 November 2012 at 10.30 am at the County Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford.

Chairman