

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 22 November 2012

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Proposals to relocate William Salt Library to Staffordshire Record Office

Recommendation(s)

1. That this report informing the Committee about the proposal to relocate the William Salt Library to Staffordshire Record Office is received.
2. That the proposal to re-launch the two services and rebrand them is received.

Report of Director for Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

The reasons for recommending relocation of the William Salt Library include:

- The current building does not provide adequate storage and environmental conditions for the collections to modern standards.
- The Library is run in parallel with the Record Office but public access to the building is difficult.
- Relocating the Library offers opportunities to deliver access to archive and local studies collections in one redeveloped research facility. This facility will offer a single site with improved public access to the Library collections alongside those of Staffordshire Record Office.
- The new development will offer more cost effective public access to the county's historic collections.

Background

3. The William Salt Library is private library administered by a charitable trust since 1872. At its core is the collection of William Salt who amassed manuscripts, books, pamphlets, graphic material and ephemera relating to Staffordshire. It started life in a building in Market Square, Stafford but moved to the current site in Eastgate Street in 1919 due to lack of space. The Library continues to grow adding books, pamphlets and other items which relate to the history of Staffordshire.

4. The William Salt Library collections and building are owned by the William Salt Library Trust. The Trust is run under a Charity Commission scheme the purpose of which is to make the collections accessible to the public.

5. The Library receives substantial support from the County Council who provide the staffing the Librarian (Head of Archives & Heritage); Assistant

Librarian (0.8 fte) and maintain the fabric of the building. This agreement was formalised in 1994 by a 99 year lease between the two organisations. In return the council receives office accommodation for some of the Archive Service staff and has four county councillors on the Trust.

6. The building is a Georgian town house grade II* listed and has a number of structural defects as well as being entirely unsuitable for storing such a significant collection.

7. The William Salt Library Trust asked the Librarian (Head of Archives) to work up a business case for relocation of the collection following an extraordinary meeting of the Trust in July. At this meeting the Trustees considered the long term future of the Library.

8. The business case was presented to Trustees at the meeting of 15 October. As a result the Trustees asked for consultation with users to be carried out and a press release to be issued stating the Trust's intentions for the Library. Consultation is ongoing during November and a press release has been issued.

9. Property Services have been working on the proposals to come up with a design for the new reading room and also the addition of more mobile shelving at Unit QB to house part of the Library collection. The first proposals will be presented to the Trust in November.

10. The proposal is to move the collection from the Library and relocate it to Staffordshire Record Office and bring it together with the archive collections held there. This will mean splitting the collection as follows:

- A proportion of very frequently used and less valuable items on open access for readers to browse and be directed to by staff.
- A proportion of the collection which is frequently accessed located on site in the Staffordshire Record Office strongrooms.
- The least frequently accessed part of the collection will be located in the Archive Service Outstore at Unit QB.

11. The proposal also includes the re-design of the Staffordshire Record Office public and office areas to accommodate the collection and the staff from the Library. This is an opportunity to re-position and launch the service as 'Staffordshire History Centre' or similar concept catering for a wide audience in Staffordshire. It complements the digitisation project as this will change the way people use the Archive Service.

12. The work will be part funded by the sale of the William Salt Library building by the Trustees. This is dependent on the Trustees accepting a proposal and seeking permission from the Charity Commission to relinquish their asset (i.e. the building). Indications are that this is likely to be granted but depends on a secure scheme for the collection being developed. The Head of Archives is also considering whether the project would be suitable for grant funding to achieve a more comprehensive long term solution for the two services.

13. The proposal will mean that savings will be realised by not having to maintain the Library building. These are included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and agreed by the Cabinet.

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Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The current Library site does offer disabled access to its public service but it is somewhat limited. This proposal will improve access to the collections for a number of user groups.

Legal implications:

The proposal will mean an end to the lease between the Trust and the County Council and the negotiation of a new agreement to secure the collection for the future.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The project will enable savings on building maintenance and also more efficient use of the existing Staffordshire Record Office site.

Risk implications:

The main risks to the project are ensuring that the Trust remains on board and can fulfil its Trust Scheme on a new site. There are risks that the costs will outweigh the value of the current building.

Climate Change implications:

The Staffordshire Record Office site is a newer, more energy efficient building, than the William Salt Library and therefore should reduce energy consumption based on the two existing sites.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Business Case for William Salt Library Relocation October 2012.	Joanna Terry/Place/ x8370