

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

## **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 20 June 2013**

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### **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Inspection by National Archives**

#### **Recommendation**

1. That the report on the Inspection of the Joint Archive Service by the National Archives is received by the committee.

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

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

2. The report informs the Committee of the Inspection by the National Archives of the whole service on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and the outcomes of the Inspection.

#### **Background**

3. The inspection was carried out under the auspices of the 1958 Public Records Act and the Historical Manuscripts Commission warrant. Under this legislation the three record offices within the Archive Service may be appointed as a Place of Deposit. This indicates that the Archive Service has reached the required standard by the National Archives to hold certain categories of records including: magistrates' court records, coroner's inquests, manorial and tithe records, and diocesan records. The standard which the Service was assessed against was BS5454: Standard for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials and The National Archives' *Standard for Record Repositories (2004)*. Note BS5454 has just been replaced by PD5454 pending a review to make it a European standard.

4. The Inspection was carried out over two days with the inspector visiting all three sites accompanied by the Head of Service and other officers as appropriate. Each site was assessed separately but also the whole of the Joint Archive Service in respect of its joint delivery of: policies, plans, online catalogue, website, conservation service, and other whole service projects.

5. There was heavy emphasis on the quality of storage, environmental monitoring, security (including CCTV and length of time recordings are kept) as core of an archive service. However the Service was also assessed in terms of its governance, staffing (numbers and level of qualified staff), budget for the service and how reductions in budget have impacted, how the conservation service works across the whole service, levels of cataloguing and whether the

backlog of material is growing or reducing, average rate of accruals each year, public service delivery and outreach activities. The service was also assessed on the amount of remaining space it has and plans for growing space.

6. The Head of Service took the opportunity to discuss longer terms plans about the way the public service delivery may change in light of digitisation. This will mean that the National Archives will need to be kept informed with regard to Place of Deposit status.

7. The results of the Inspection were very positive. Stoke on Trent City Archives was re-appointed as a Place of Deposit including its newly improved strongrooms. It was commended for how it has adapted to budget reductions and its new opening hours. It was recommended that an acclimatisation facility was developed and that automatic environmental monitoring software was introduced for the strongrooms.

8. Lichfield Record Office was also re-appointed as a Place of Deposit subject to any impending review of service delivery. The service was praised for delivering a service conducive to research and the storage areas were well planned and equipped. It was recommended that additional security cameras were installed by the entrances to the stores and that variations in environmental conditions were investigated.

9. Staffordshire Record Office was also re-appointed as a Place of Deposit subject to any impending review of service delivery. It was complimented on providing an excellent service and as in the other offices the staff were highly praised for their work. The reading room was deemed to be more than adequate for researchers and the event room was praised as multi-functional space able to operate as a hub for the County's history network. The strongrooms were also commended but it was suggested that a review of the performance of the environmental monitoring equipment was carried out. An isolation facility was also suggested as an improvement. Additional security cameras for the reading room were also recommended along with retention of a longer period of digital recordings.

10. The Inspection was overall very positive for the Service especially at Stoke where the improvements there have been praised. The county service also performed well but it is important that any change to provision in the service is done in consultation with the National Archives. The Head of Service intends to continue the dialogue begun as part of the Inspection and to assess the recommendations and develop a plan to make improvements as appropriate.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Equalities implications:**

The inspection cover public service provision and ensuring access available in a variety of ways.

### **Legal implications:**

The Inspection is carried out under the auspices of the 1958 Public Records Act and the Historical Manuscripts Commission warrant. This entitles the service to hold certain categories of records and means provision of service must continue to meet these standards to maintain Place of Deposit status.

### **Resource and Value for money implications:**

The Inspection recommended some improvements which would need to be met from the Joint Archive Service budget. An improvement plan will be developed and costed.

### **Risk implications:**

By ensuring that the National Archives remains involved in discussions about changes to the Archive Service risks of losing Place of Deposit status will be minimised.

### **Climate Change implications:**

The inspection made recommendations regarding improvements to air conditioning equipment and its performance which could impact on climate change.

### **Health Impact Assessment screening:**

No significant implications.

### **Report author:**

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### **List of Background Papers**

Reports and advisory letters for:	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Staffordshire Record Office	Joanna Terry, Place, 278370.
Lichfield Record Office	
Stoke on Trent City Archives	