

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

## **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 19 June 2014**

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### **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Report 2013-2014**

#### **Recommendation(s)**

1. That this report informing the Committee about the annual report on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service for the period April 2013 to March 2014 is received and approved.

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

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

2. The accompanying Annual Report provides an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year, April 2013 to March 2014.

#### **Background**

3. The terms of the Joint Agreement for Archive Services between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council requires an annual report on the work of the Joint Archive Service to be brought to the Annual Meeting in June. The Annual Report also provides the means by which the Committee can be presented with a full overview of the range of activities, progress and performance of the Service.

4. The year 2013-2014 was the second in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. This year's Annual Report shows both positive achievements and steady progress towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2012-2015. These objectives are:

- An integrated onsite and online customer experience
- An innovative online presence which showcases Staffordshire's collections
- Engagement with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their sense of identity and place
- Celebration and discovery of Staffordshire's history
- A sustainable high performing service which provides leadership for the Archives Heritage Sector
- Improving and promoting user access to Staffordshire's collections

- Delivering high quality care of Staffordshire's collections
- Extended volunteer working in Archives & Heritage providing opportunities for people to increase their skills and help support access to collections

5. The Annual Report demonstrates a very productive year for the Joint Archive Service in terms of its performance, achievements and associated activity. The most notable successes have been: the delivery of two grant funded projects to catalogue the Bradford Archive and to digitise the Staffordshire Manorial Documents Register. In addition Stoke Archives has made significant progress cataloguing the Spode Archive. Building on the successful start of the Great War Centennial Commemorations the Service has continued to work with many local groups and organisations to build a programme of events. Begun with Arts Council funding this has been taken further with another project bid submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to digitise and index the rare Military Tribunal records. These projects all have one thing in common; they rely on volunteer support to make them happen and widen access to our collections.

6. The Archive Service has also embarked on an ambitious project to extend Staffordshire Record Office to enable to co-location of the William Salt Library and Lichfield Record Office collections on one site. This will allow the partnership to provide modern storage and searchrooms with additional facilities such as a user break out space to relax and consume refreshments and an exhibition space to show off the fine collections that the Service holds. The Service has also just started its digitisation project with D C Thomson (Find My Past) which will bring online access to the county and city's parish registers

7. The Service made good progress in the core areas of activity: improving access to collections; the public services; cataloguing; learning; preservation; and conservation. It was a particularly successful year in terms of outreach working with some very positive outcomes for communities with the continuation of the Rural Roadshow and popular Staffordshire History Day. A second archive exhibition, *Stafford: A proper little town*, celebrated 1,100 years of Stafford's history. With 710 visitors it compared well to the previous exhibition and showed that users are interested in seeing the collections on display alongside accessible interpretation. It supports the vision of how access will develop in the proposed new extension.

8. The year was also a challenging one as personal visits continued to fall by 1.3% overall but showed a slow-down compared to the previous year. This is in line with trends in other local archive services as users continue to prefer to access material remotely or photograph sources and carry on their research at home.

9. Online visits were similarly down by 8% to the main website compared to a 10% increase the previous year. However sites such as the Staffordshire Name Indexes continued to grow by 13%. Attendances at events were up by 30% mainly generated by the successful exhibition on Stafford. The biggest

increase was the number of volunteer hours given to the Service which was up over 30% as their involvement in a number of projects continues to grow. This is equivalent to an additional three members of staff or nearly £60,000. Use of the Service continues to change and we have begun to develop plans to adapt to new demands starting with the digitisation programme of popular sources. A review of the charging structure for photography services has seen orders more than triple. Sales of daily camera permits have also increased as users increasingly photograph material, or request copies, to carry out research at home.

10. The Joint Archive Service produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and achieved a 99% customer satisfaction rating in the national Public Services Quality Group User Survey. It also extended its Customer Service Excellence award to gain another compliance plus and include the County Museum within the scope of the award.

11. Overall it was a very successful year for the Service continuing to meet high standards whilst also developing major plans to adapt to changing demands.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Equalities implications:**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the personnel and equal opportunities' policies of the County Council and the City Council.

### **Legal implications:**

The work of the Archive Service is governed by the Joint Agreement and other legislation to allow both authorities to meet their legal obligations.

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

The Archive Service delivers a range of work which is measured in a number of ways and detailed in the appendices of the Annual Report.

### **Risk implications:**

None applicable.

### **Climate Change implications:**

None applicable.

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

No significant implications.

### **Report author:**

Author's Name: Joanna Terry, Head of Archives  
Telephone No: (01785) 278370  
Room No: Staffordshire Record Office

### **List of Background Papers**

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Annual Report 2013-2014	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370