

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee  
meeting held on 20 November 2014**

Present: Ben Adams (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Mike Davies (Observer) and Adrian Knapper (Substitute)

Apologies for absence: Olwen Hamer and Ian Parry

**PART ONE**

**8. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

At its annual meeting in June the Joint Committee elected a Chairman and Vice-Chairman from amongst its members (on a rotating basis alternatively between the two Council's) and this year the Chairmanship sits with Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Following changes to the Constitutions and Cabinet Portfolios at the County Council and City Council the representatives on the Joint Archive Committee had changed to Ben Adams (County Council) Mike Davies (Observer – County Council) and Olwen Hamer (City Council). Ms Hamer was not able to attend this meeting therefore she was confirmed as Chairman in her absence.

**RESOLVED** - (a) that Olwen Hamer be appointed Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2015.

(b) that Ben Adams be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2015.

**Ben Adams (in his capacity as Vice-Chairman) took the Chair**

**9. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16**

No declarations at this meeting.

**10. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2014**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2014 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**11. Predicted Outturn 2014/15**

The Committee considered a joint report on the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2013/14 (Schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The Finance Officer corrected figures quoted in the report for the expected spend and predicted outturn and informed Members that the predicted outturn for the Service showed an expected spend of £668,028 compared with an approved budget of £681,140.

Members noted that the latest revenue outturn forecast showed a predicted underspend of £13,112, which would be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial

year. This gave the General Reserve a current balance of £95,148; and the Archive Acquisition Reserve a balance of £62,342. Members noted that £50,000 of the General Reserve had been earmarked towards the costs of the proposed extension to the Stafford Record Office at an earlier meeting.

Members were also informed of the collection of Geoffrey Godden, a renowned writer and researcher on the history of ceramics, which the Archives Service was seeking permission to purchase. The collection falls within the Services' collection policy and was being offered at a discounted price by Mr Godden. Approval was being sought to allocate £4,800 from the Acquisition Reserve towards the costs of purchasing the Geoffrey Godden Collection.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the request to use £4,800 from the Acquisition Reserve to purchase the Geoffrey Godden Collection be approved.

## **12. Review of Fees and Charges 2015-2016**

The Committee received a joint report (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes) on the review of fees and charges for 2015-2016, which had been reviewed on an annual basis for a number of years to allow the Service to adapt its services according to demand and cost of provision.

The standard sources for income generation for the Archive Service were:- a range of copying services; the sale of photographic permits; research, transcription and certification services; sales of publications; donations; and fees for talks by, and group visits, to the Archive Service. In addition, from 2014 the Archive Service had benefitted from income from its partnership with a commercial provider to make key archive collections available online.

The review was intended to be a balanced approach which encouraged use of services whilst still ensuring that income was generated to support the running of such services.

This year the main change to the fees and charges had been the increase of the research fee. This fee was the basis for other charges and below was a list of other related fees affected by the increase:

- Research fee
- Quick research fee and Hospital Records search fee
- Marriage bond search fee
- Certification fee
- Aligning photocopy and scanned images charges
- In house photography charge
- Publication fees

Ben Adams (Vice-Chairman in the Chair) asked for statistical information of the take-up of services now and following the increase of fees, with an assessment over a two to three year period being brought to a future meeting. Members noted the detail in the report and agreed that the proposed fees and charges represent a fair and reasonable increase.

**RESOLVED** – that the fees and charges proposed in the report be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from April 2015.

### **13. Digital Engagement Strategy**

The Committee received a joint report (Schedule 3 to the signed minutes) on the Digital Engagement Strategy which had been introduced to set a framework for the service with its use of social media and digital communications.

They noted that the Archive Service had developed a strategy to ensure that new and existing channels of communication were used together and effectively to reach new audiences. It draws on a social media strategy for the Museum on the Move and work done towards a web content strategy in 2008 which had not introduced due to lack of technical solutions.

Members noted new objectives set for using the channels, implementing new ones, and that a team had been set up to own the Strategy and deliver it. Mr. Adams suggested that the strategy be assessed every six months at first, to ensure all new digital engagement channels were being used to their full potential, rather than a reviewed in three years times. He also asked that there was a standard item on the agenda to ensure the Committee was kept up to date with developments.

**RESOLVED** – that the Digital Engagement Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service be approved.

### **14. Heritage Lottery Fund bid for Staffordshire History Centre**

The Committee received an update (Schedule 4 to the signed minutes) on the progress of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid for Staffordshire History Centre. Members were aware that the focus of the project was to bring together archive service collections from Lichfield and Stafford together with the William Salt Library onto one site, to enable the Service to transform the way it operates.

The project would enable both services to change the visitor experience; preserve priceless archive material; and expand record storage facilities to meet the current and future storage demands and also comply with the required British Standards. It would also enable both services to be delivered more efficiently and ensure long term sustainability of the Archive offer within Staffordshire.

Members will be aware that the stage 1 HLF bid had been submitted in April 2014, but the bid was rejected in July, with a resubmission welcomed. The rejection of the HLF bid in July was disappointing but not unusual. It had given the Project Team an opportunity to reflect on the feedback and develop a new approach involving stakeholders in the decision making. The allocation of funding to employ a consultant would bring additional capacity and creativity to the project. The development of strong vision for a sustainable and resilient Archive Service would ensure benefits regardless of whether HLF funding was secured or not. The focus would still be on attracting investment to save on service delivery costs but the vision would also provide a plan for transforming the Service without HLF funding and delivering a sustainable funding model for the future.

Members noted the plans for the national bid and solutions being discussed regarding the William Salt Library building and asked that the project team investigate other ways of progressing the project.

**RESOLVED** – that the progress report on the Heritage Lottery Fund bid be received and noted.

**15. Date of next meeting - 19 February 2015 in Stoke-on-Trent (venue to be confirmed)**

**RESOLVED** – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday 19 February 2015 at 10.30 am in Stoke-on-Trent (venue to be confirmed).

**16. Exclusion of the public**

That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below.

**17. Update on Digitisation of key family history collection**

The Committee considered a joint report updating them on the digitisation of key family history collection (Schedule 5 to the signed minutes). Members were aware that the Archive Service had a contract with Find My Past (FMP) to digitise key family history held by the Archive Service. The collections included popular name rich records including: parish registers for the historic counties of Staffordshire; wills and inventories for the Diocese of Lichfield (covering several counties); and marriage bonds and allegations for the Diocese of Lichfield.

In total approximately six million names would be available to search once all of the above records are digitised and transcribed. This would enable the service to: provide world wide online access to the Archive Service's most heavily used collections; generate income to help support the care of these archives; meet user demand for online access; enable the Service to transform its delivery model for access to its collections. Members were aware that the public were able to access the FMP website free via computers at some County and City Libraries. They also noted the statistics detailed in the report and that further updates on access to Staffordshire Collections would be brought to the Committee via the performance report and the Annual Report, early in 2015.

**RESOLVED** – that the update report on the digitisation of key family history collections be received

**Chairman**