

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 26 March 2015

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Service Plan 2014/2015: Predicted Outturn Performance

Recommendation(s)

1. That this report informing the Committee on the predicted outturn against the targets set in Joint Archive Service's Annual Service Plan is received and noted.

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

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Archive Service has made very good progress against its targets this year and a more detailed summary is set out at Appendix 2 to this report. The predicted performance indicators to 31 March 2015 are recorded in Appendix 3.

Background

3. The Service Plan sets the annual targets for the performance of Joint Archive Service. These targets work towards the overall achievement of the Archive Service's current three- year service objectives, which are set out in its Forward Plan, 2012-2015, approved by the Joint Archives Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2012. The key achievements are highlighted below.

An integrated onsite and online customer experience

4. The Archive Service has renewed its award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard and maintained compliance plus for its community engagement work and the use of volunteers in the service. The Service has also carried out its annual customer survey with a 100% satisfaction rating overall. In July 2014 the first phase of Staffordshire Parish Registers was launched online with Find My Past with almost three million names available to search online. The Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service have launched a fundraising campaign in September 2014 to digitise tithe maps for the county.

5. The Service has held workshops with staff, partners, Friends groups and users to develop its new vision which will form the next Forward Plan. This plan has also been consulted on with existing users, Friends groups and local

history group members. The Service will also use the Plan to help develop and re-submit its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (unsuccessful in 2014) to redevelop its service later in 2015.

An innovative online presence which showcases Staffordshire's archives

6. Progress has stalled on the development of the Staffordshire Places website as staff time is no longer available to dedicate to the site. Two different volunteers have been approached without success. A final attempt will be made in 2015 to advertise for a volunteer.

7. The Archives and Heritage Facebook page (established in 2012) goes from strength to strength with two articles a week posted. It expects add images of 59 documents by the end of the year and currently has 532 likes (up from 244 from last year). In July the Service launched its Twitter account to coincide with the launch of the parish registers online. It currently has 576 followers and has grown steadily since July with uplift in December related to the Christmas Truce story. Work has also continued on adding new indexes to the Staffordshire Name Indexes website including 10 more years of wills; an index of coroner's reports; and a new Great War index of soldiers' photographs in the Sentinel newspaper. Virtual visits have increased by approximately 2.7%.

Engagement with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their identity and place

8. This year the Rural Roadshow was held in Codsall and attracted 341 visitors on the day. The event was organised in partnership with the local history society to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the village hall. The exhibition was donated to the local history society to be used again.

9. The Archive Service was successful in gaining funding from the Heritage Lottery to support its 'Staffordshire Appeals' project. The funding will enable the indexing, digitising and repackaging of rare military tribunal records for Staffordshire in the Great War. The project received a huge amount of interest when it was launched in September with media coverage locally and nationally. This led to over 100 people coming forward to offer to volunteer with the project. 55 were signed up and started work in November and as a result more research is being carried out into related sources about the Great War. This will feed into the exhibition which will be created towards the end of the project in 2016.

10. The Service has continued to support the local history group at Tamworth which in turn will help the Service deliver its 2015 Roadshow in the town. The Service worked with two schools as part of a funded project with the Library Service and supported visits from several further and higher education institutions. New contacts included a teacher training course at Birmingham University and Stafford College.

Celebrate and discover Staffordshire's history

11. The Service delivered a wide range of events, courses and talks throughout the year with an estimated 3,600 attendances. The Staffordshire History Day was fully booked in 2014 and this year (28 March) it has sold out early on again. This partnership event with Keele University and Birmingham Centre for West Midlands Studies provides a varied range of speakers on several different subjects which attracts new and repeat attendees each year. A Great War Study Day in September proved popular in addition to the regular Victoria County History Day. The Treasures Day at Lichfield Record Office to tie in with the city's Heritage Weekend was well supported. Once again the Family History Course was popular with staff able to guide people through using archive sources.

A sustainable high performing service which provides leadership for the Archives and Heritage sector

12. The Service continued to support its staff working towards an archival qualification and achieving accredited conservator status. A new policy on Digital Engagement was developed and approved in November 2014 to give direction to social media activity. The Service was particularly successful at Christmas revealing a letter written on 25 December 2014 in an event at the National Memorial Arboretum.

13. After not succeeding on first attempt with funding from the Heritage Lottery, the Service has reviewed and refocused work on its project to transform its public access in the County with the appointment of consultants to assist the project team. Two stakeholder engagement workshops have been carried out to address concerns raised in 2014 and develop solutions with some of the groups. This work has also been focussed on creating a shared ten year vision which will form the next Forward Plan for the Service. A community conversation was held in February to test the vision with users of the service. The intention is to continue this work with partners and stakeholders to develop more detailed options with a view to resubmitting a Heritage Lottery bid later in 2015.

Improving and promoting user access to Staffordshire's archive collections

14. Work on cataloguing the Archive Service collections has made great progress this year thanks to grant funding, and the dedication of both staff and volunteers to keep this work moving forward. The grant funded cataloguing project for the Bradford Archive completed in September 2014 and since then the collection has been well used as more information is available in the online catalogue. In addition the service received £40,000 funding from the National Archives to deliver the Manorial Documents Register project for Staffordshire which it completed in February 2015. The project has revealed particularly full and detailed records in the Paget Collection. This information will go into a national online database of manorial records. All of this work feeds into our online catalogue and allows people to search the descriptions of our collections and encourages use of them. This area of work receives much support from volunteers and placements with the Service.

Delivering high quality care of Staffordshire's archive collections

15. The Annual Conservation programmes have been successfully delivered. In addition this year, thanks to more grant funding from the Clothworkers Guild, a conservation intern has been appointed to work alongside the conservation team and gain new skills.

16. Work has continued to rationalise space in both Staffordshire Record Office and Unit QB Outstore. This work forms part of the preparatory work for the proposed changes to Archive Service buildings. Work has also started to implement an electronic database recording the location of collections using existing software. This will help improve management of the collections and provision of statistics on space usage. Further conservation work was carried out on the William Salt Library collections.

Extend volunteer working to provide new opportunities for people to increase their skills and increase access to collections

17. The volunteer programme has continued to make really good progress with completion of the tithe map indexing project in sight. The preservation volunteer group has continued their work repackaging and content listing of Staffordshire Newsletter glass negatives. Volunteer hours are set to exceed target due to a large number joining to support the Great War project.

Local Performance Indicators

18. The targets for the performance indicators were presented at the Joint Archive Committee on 19 June 2014. The figure for usages of the Service is predicted to be 325,000 which is 20% above the target. The main cause of the increase appears to be virtual visits (which last year saw a drop). Virtual visits have an unpredictable pattern but broadly continue to increase over time.

19. The number of people attending an events is predicted to exceed by about 8% despite the absence of a major exhibition this year. This is in part due to the success of the roadshow in Codsall and an additional study day on the Great War in September.

20. Volunteer hours are likely to exceed the target by 10% due to the increase in hours from the Staffordshire Appeals Great War project.

21. The target approaches to acquire new archive collections is predicted to be just under 220 at 213. This target has been consistently achieved in previous years.

22. Performance against the customer satisfaction target was achieved in the autumn at 100% after taking part in a national customer survey for archives in 2014.

Conclusion

23. Overall the performance of the Archive Service has remained strong with four out of five performance indicators likely to exceed target. The Service has started to adapt the way it works by mixing professional skills with volunteer support, grant funding and launching more content online. Whilst it was unsuccessful in its first attempt to attract grant funding to transform the Service it has continued with the project to develop it in partnership with Friends groups and hopes for success in 2015. It has been successful in attracting grant funding for other projects to widen access to collections and improve preservation. As always core work has continued with the delivery of more catalogued collections, more engagement through events and social media, and a public service with 100% satisfaction rating.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The service continues to offer choice in the way its services are accessed and has delivered a range of events onsite and offsite to reach a variety of audiences.

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.

Risk implications:

Risks of not meeting performance targets are partly governed by resources.

Climate Change implications:

The indicators note attendance at onsite and offsite events including community events which have been delivered to avoid unnecessary travel. It also reflects the increased use of online resources.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Annual Service plan bi-monthly reports 2014-2015	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370