

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee - 18 June 2015

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Report 2014-2015

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 the Acting Director for Place (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (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 2014 to March 2015.

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 2014-2015 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 completion of two grant funded projects to catalogue the Bradford Archive and to digitise the Staffordshire Manorial Documents Register. The Service was also successful with its bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to digitise and index the rare Military Tribunal records.

6. This year Stoke Archives has received some really exciting new collections during the year which will form major projects in 2015/2016. The first was the Michelin Archive which was deposited in December 2014 after negotiations with the company. The collection will be catalogued through a collaboration between Michelin and volunteers (some ex-staff of the company) and support from archive staff to deal with this large and significant archive quickly. During March the City Archivist worked with the Art Fund to agree a deed of gift of the Minton Archive right at the end of March. A truly bumper year for Stoke and the Archive Service and contributing more high quality archives to ensure the Designated Collections status is well-deserved. Overall the Service increased the proportion of collections which has either a full or partial catalogue online by 1.2% up to 92.3% of all collections. This also includes the process of appraising collections prior to cataloguing to ensure only items worthy of permanent preservation are retained.

7. The greatest disappointment of the year was the rejection of the HLF bid to extend Staffordshire Record Office to co-locate collections from the Lichfield Record Office and William Salt Library. However the feedback from HLF was used to develop a new plan for the Service and, with the support of consultants, a new vision was developed. This time the plans for the future of the Service have been co-created with staff, users, partners, Friends groups, and volunteers. Delivery options have been developed which will be consulted on during the summer.

8. The Service launched the first phase of the Staffordshire Collection with Find My Past. Almost three million records went online in July 2014 at a launch and celebration event at Staffordshire Record Office for volunteers who work with the service. In the first six months over half a million records have been viewed. This will generate greater access and income for the Service.

9. 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 for the conservation team as they hosted an internship funded by the Clothworkers Foundation. Jenny Snowdon has been learning new skills from our experienced conservators and making a big contribution to the Bradford physical state of the Bradford Archive by working on that collection.

10. As online access was extended in July 2014 so the service saw further falls in personal visits to reading rooms by over 14%. However usages overall, virtual and remote visits, attendances at events and volunteer hours all increased significantly. 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.

11. Online visits were up by 7.6% to the main website with a dip in visits to the Staffordshire Name Indexes site. 55 new volunteers joined the Archive Service in the autumn to work on the Staffordshire Appeals project. In total 7,429 hours were given to the Service which equates to an additional 3.8fte members of staff or over £70,000. Use of the Service continues to change and we have developed a new vision which focuses on online delivery, active partnerships with volunteers and groups, new activities and events, social media, and moves away from building based services.

10. The Joint Archive Service produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and achieved a 100% customer satisfaction rating in the national Public Services Quality Group User Survey. It also maintained its Customer Service Excellence award retaining its two compliance plus ratings.

11. Overall it was a very successful year for the Service continuing to meet high standards whilst also developing a new ten year vision 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 2014-2015	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370