

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 16 June 2016

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Report 2015-2016

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 2015 to March 2016 is received and approved.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (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 2015 to March 2016.

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 2015-2016 was the first in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. This year's Annual Report shows some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2015-2018. These objectives are:

- Developing an active partnership approach.
- Delivering resilience and sustainability.
- Reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences.
- Sharing knowledge across the UK.
- Increasing our online presence and remote access.

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 acquisition and first phase of cataloguing the Minton Archive and the successful stage 1 Heritage Lottery bid for the Staffordshire History Centre. The Service has had more successes with grant funding secured from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (for the Minton Archive), Wellcome Trust (to catalogue medical officer of health records) and two collaborative doctoral awards (to research and improve catalogues of environmental records). The Service also continued its successful Heritage Lottery Funded project, Staffordshire Appeal, to digitise and index rare Military Tribunal records.

6. This year Stoke on Trent City Archives had the exciting task of transferring the Minton Archive into its strongrooms and started the first phase of cataloguing work. This is the largest collection the City Archives holds and with support from the Art Fund the service could second its archivist, Louise Ferriday, to carry out the cataloguing of the Minton records only within the archive. Supported by the Digital Development Officer, Andrew Dawson, and a number of volunteers the catalogue was launched online with its own web front end which included many images of documents from the collection. A successful conservation grant means work will start on conserving the collection in 2016. A further cataloguing bid has been submitted to complete the remaining part of the collection.

7. Overall the Service increased the proportion of collections which has either a full or partial catalogue online up by 0.5% up to 92.69% of all collections. This also includes the process of appraising collections prior to cataloguing to ensure only items worthy of permanent preservation are retained.

8. During 2015 – 2016 significant progress was made on proposals to change the delivery of the County Archive and Heritage Service and William Salt Library. The results of the consultation in 2015 showed over half of respondents supported proposals for the service to operate from one site. The preferred option to re-develop the Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library site was further developed with Roberts Limbricks Architects into a design for the Staffordshire History Centre. The bid was submitted in February 2016 with the successful stage 1 pass in May.

9. The Service launched the second phase of the Staffordshire Collection with Find My Past. Another three million records went online in August 2015 to add the remaining parish registers. By December the Lichfield Diocesan marriage bonds and allegations and the wills were also added. This has significantly increased the amount of material available to search online with 1,578,646 Staffordshire records viewed during the year.

10. 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 cataloguing teams as they made progress in adding more information into the online catalogue with the help of grant funding and volunteers. The front end of the catalogue, Gateway to the Past, was also upgraded which was a significant

piece of work. It means the catalogue has simplified search templates and can display images and catalogues more easily online.

11. As online access was greatly extended in 2015 so the service saw further falls in personal visits to reading rooms by 4%, as people choose to access material online. However usages overall and volunteer hours all increased significantly. Attendances at events were less this year as the Service concentrated on major consultations and developing the HLF bid.

12. Online visits were down by 3.9% to the main website but increased by 1.6% to the catalogue, Gateway to the Past. The number of volunteers remained high at 119, and a total of 8,641 hours were given to the Service which equates to an additional 4.4fte members of staff. As use of the Service continues to change we have moved to more promotion online particularly using social media. The number of Facebook likes increased by 61% to 907 and Twitter followers up by 104% to 1,228.

13. The Joint Archive Service produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and achieved a 98% customer satisfaction rating in the local User Survey.

14. Overall it was a very successful year for the Service continuing to meet high standards whilst also making significant progress on a new model for delivery via the Staffordshire History Centre.

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 2015-2015	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370