

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 17 November 2016

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Report on Collections Information Policy and Access Policy

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Collections Information and Access policies are approved by the Committee.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources Director (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Background

2. At its meeting on 26 March 2015 the Joint Archive Committee resolved that the Archive Service should apply for Archive Service Accreditation. The Archive Service is currently preparing its application for Accreditation. As part of this process it has created two new policies to meet the requirements of the standard. The Archive Service is a Place of Deposit inspected by the National Archives and is required to become accredited by the end of 2017. The Archive Accreditation standard will also help the service when seeking external funding as the Heritage Lottery Fund and other funders see it as a sign of quality assurance. The National Archives oversees the Archive Accreditation Standard.

3. The County Museum Service forms part of the County's Archive and Heritage Service and is renewing its application to hold the Museum Accreditation Standard. The Museum Service is required to hold the Accreditation standard (provisional or otherwise) to gain access to Arts Council England funding and West Midlands Museum Development funding.

4. Both accreditation standards provide guidance on the types of policies and procedures required to comply with the standard. The standards set the benchmark for good service provision, collections care and public access.

5. The Archive Service requires a Collections Information Policy to assist it in meeting the Archive Accreditation Standard. The Archive Service and County Museum both require an Access Policy to assist in meeting their respective accreditation standards.

6. Both policies are brought for approval by the parent body of the service to enable them to be submitted with the accreditation submissions.

Collections Information Policy

7. The Collections Information Policy sets out the policy and processes in place to ensure that collections are documented properly from the time of their receipt into the care of the Archive Service.

8. Collections information is of vital importance in fulfilling the responsibilities of the Archive Service to its parent authorities, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council, and to the owners of deposited collections. The information assists the Service in its role of stewardship of the records in its care.

9. The Policy describes the systems in place for recording collections information and the processes in place to capture information. This includes:

- Accessioning/point of deposit
- Depositor records, ownership and legal status of collections
- Access restrictions
- Publicising new accessions
- Disposals and withdrawals
- Location and movement control
- Finding aids and cataloguing
- Conservation and preservation information
- Staffing and use of external funding to support cataloguing
- Filing systems and electronic systems to record information
- Plans for improving the quality of collections information.

10. Accessioning is the process of recording ownership and status of collections at the time of receipt, basic description of content and assigning collection reference. A signed receipt is sent to the depositor to confirm the acquisition of the collection under the standard terms of deposit for the Archive Service. The service also records information about intellectual property rights and access restrictions.

11. Depositor records include information about the owner, organisation or intermediary who is transferring the collection to the Archive Service.

12. New accessions and the release of new catalogues are publicised by the service. Cataloguing is a more detailed process of recording information about collections so that users can search for relevant records as part of their research.

13. Movement of collections either within the service or temporarily to owners, other organisations, and for loan is recorded in the manual and electronic systems. Document control processes ensure archives are used securely within searchrooms.

14. Conservation and preservation work required are recorded in manual and electronic systems. All conservation treatment is documented so that processes can be reversed if required.

15. Whilst professional staff lead cataloguing work, para professional staff also play a prominent role. In the last five years volunteers have also played a vital role in helping to improve information and open up access to collections. This work is

supervised by staff. External funding has been sought to catalogue specific collections such as the Bradford Estate Archive, and the Minton and Doulton Archives. Enhancement of catalogue information has been supported by University Collaborative Doctoral Research project such as a current project on records about flooding and land drainage.

16. Manual and electronic systems are used to record information about collections. The Archive Service uses archive management software (CALM ALM Axiell Ltd) to record the majority of information about collections. Manual records such as accession registers are also kept with digital copies as a back-up.

17. Programmes of work to improve collections information are produced by the cross service Collections Development and Management teams. These plans are reviewed and agreed by the Archives and Heritage Management Team.

Access Policy

18. The Access Policy sets out how access is provided to Archive and Heritage Service Collections. It provides information on restrictions to access, where charges might apply and links to other relevant policies.

19. The policy describes the establishment of the record offices and the county museum. It then describes the various means of access available including:

- Onsite access to collections and the community who use the service
- Expectations for visitors and standards of service
- Security procedures
- Handling and preservation guidelines
- Use of cameras and methods of copying
- Access restrictions, why they may apply and how to request access
- Remote access methods
- Learning and engagement activities to widen access.

20. The Access Policy provides links to other policies, guidelines and content to direct people to more information. Appended to the policy is the Service Charter which sets out standards of service that customers can expect when visiting our offices or using remote services.

21. Approval of these policies by the governing body is a requirement of both Archive and Museum Accreditation Standards. The policies will also support the planning of improvements to collections information and widening access to collections.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

Both policies describe ways in which collections can be made accessible in a variety of ways and to as wide a community as possible.

Legal implications:

The policies are required to support Accreditation and it is a requirement for the Archive Service to achieve this standard by 2017.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The policies describe how related work is resourced both within existing budget and by seeking external funding, partner support, or volunteer support.

Risk implications:

No significant implications.

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Collections Information Policy	
Access Policy	