

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 16 June 2016**

Present: Ben Adams and Terry Follows (Chairman)

Apologies for absence: Ian Parry and Gill Heath

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Chairman informed the Committee that following the Annual Meeting of the County Council he had been appointed as a Substitute Member to the Joint Committee and that Mrs. C.G. Heath and Mr. I.M. Parry were now the Authority's Member representatives for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

The Chairman then referred to a thank you note he had received from Christine Price, the former secretary to the Joint Committee, who had retired from her post at the County Council since their previous meeting.

RESOLVED – (a) That Mr. T. Follows be appointed Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in June 2017.

(b) That Mrs. G. Heath be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting on June 2017.

(c) That the good wishes of the Joint Committee be conveyed to Mrs. Price for a long and happy retirement.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Joint Archive Services: Annual Report 2015/16

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families Communities and Chief Operating Officer – Resources, giving details of the Annual Report for 2015/16 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes) which had been produced in accordance with the Joint Agreement.

The Annual Report provided an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

This was the first year in the current three-year planning cycle for the Service. The report highlighted some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the service within the current Forward Plan 2015- 2018 including:- (i) developing an active partnership approach; (ii) developing resilience and sustainability; (iii) reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences; (iv) sharing knowledge across the UK and; (v) increasing online presence and remote access.

It had been a productive year in terms of performance, achievements and associated activity with the most notable successes being (i) the acquisition of the Minton Archive and completion of the first phase in its cataloguing; (ii) a successful stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery fund for the Staffordshire History Centre; (iii) a successful bid to the National Manuscripts Conservation Fund in respect of the Minton Archive; (iv) a successful bid to the Wellcome Trust to catalogue Medical Officer for Health records and (v) two collaborative doctoral awards to research and improve catalogues of environmental records. In addition, work continued on the Heritage Lottery funded project 'Staffordshire Appeal' for the digitisation and indexing of rare Military Tribunal Records.

With regard to (i) and (iii) above, Stoke-on-Trent's Archive Service had transferred the Minton archives into their strongrooms and commenced the first phase of the cataloguing work. With assistance from their Digital Development Officer and a number of volunteers the catalogue had also been launched on line with its own microsite including many images of documents from the collection. With the award of a conservation grant, work to conserve the collection was to commence later in the year. In addition a further bid for grant aid had been submitted to enable completion of the remaining part of the catalogue.

With regard to (ii) above significant progress had been made in respect of proposals to change the delivery of the County Archive and Heritage Service and William Salt Library in Stafford. The results of a consultation undertaken in 2015 had indicated that over half of respondents supported proposals for the service to operate from one site. Subsequently the preferred option to redevelop the sites into a design for a Staffordshire History Centre had been taken forward in collaboration with Robert Limbricks Architects. A bid for funding had been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in February 2016 and confirmation that it had been successful was received in May 2016.

With regard to take-up of services by the public, 2015/16 had seen a fall in personal visits to reading rooms by 4% and hits on the Archives Service webpage by 3.9%. However, this was to be expected owing to the expansion of online access to catalogues such as 'Gateway to the Past' which had increased by 1.6%. However, the number of volunteers who had given their time to the Archives service over the year had remained relatively high at 119, which totalled 8,641 hours or 4.4 full time equivalent members of staff. Notwithstanding these encouraging statistics, efforts had continued to be made to promote the service online particularly using social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

The Committee noted that the Service had produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and had achieved a 98% customer satisfaction rating in the Local User Survey.

The Member representative of the County Council echoed the comments of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities and Chief Operating Officer – Resources made in the report, paying tribute to the Archives teams at both Authorities for their work during the year which had led to the many achievements/successes. However, he expressed concern that the number hits on the Archives Service’s main website had declined over the year and emphasised the need for greater engagement with the public. Continuing he suggested that appropriate media campaigns incorporating social media should be run by each Authorities’ Communication Teams in order to publicise the collections on offer.

The Chairman agreed with the representative of the County Council and added that items from the Minton Archive would shortly be on permanent display at the City Central Library which he hoped would help to generate interest from.

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

(b) That the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service Annual Report for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 be approved.

5. Joint Archive Service: Revenue Outturn 2015/16

The Committee considered a joint report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) setting out the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2015/16 (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The outturn showed that the service had a net spend of £696,722 compared to an approved budget of 702,300 giving an overall underspend of £5,578 which has now been transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. The General Reserve balance now stands at £28,233. The Archive Acquisition Reserve used for the purchase of new collections currently holds a balance of £57,542..

The Committee were reminded that they are now no longer required to submit a Small Bodies in England Annual return owing to legislative changes brought in by Local Authority and Accountability Act 2014.

With regard to the 2016/17 Revenue Budget, although this had been approved by the Committee at their meeting in February 2016, the County Council has since requested that all budget holders review their respective budgets in order to identify any non-essential spend which could be withheld in year to offset against expected spending pressures. Accordingly, an examination of the County Council funded element of the Joint Agreement Net Revenue Budget had identified £13,038 comprising primarily of reduced (i) training; (ii) printing; (iii) administration and a small reduction on conservation spend.

In response to a question from the Member representative of the County Council, the Treasurer to the Joint Archive Committee explained that the proposed reductions identified in the Net Revenue Budget were for 2016/17 financial year only and the budget for 2017/18 would be unaffected. The Member then commented on the level of

the proposed savings which he said were sensible and reasonable given the budgetary pressures the Authority are currently under.

The Chairman said that he welcomed the reduction in bureaucracy arising from the legislative changes which removed the requirement for the Joint Committee to submit a Small Bodies in England Annual Return as a reduction in bureaucracy.

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

(b) That the proposed in year savings identified in the County Council funded element of the County Archive Service Budget be approved.

6. Staffordshire History Centre update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources Director (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) regarding the outcome of the bid which had been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for development of the Staffordshire History Centre.

The Committee had previously been informed of the findings of the consultations which had been held into the options for delivery of the Archives and Heritage Vision for Staffordshire. The preferred option (Option A) was to create a Staffordshire History Centre with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). It entailed redeveloping the Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library sites in order to put the collections from the library and Lichfield Record Office into new storage in the correct conditions and create a browsing space and programme of activities eg touring exhibitions and schools' learning to engage with the public. The upper floors of the William Salt Library building would be used for income generation and a new access point would be created for Lichfield.

At their previous meeting, the Committee learned that the HLF bid had been submitted on 11 February 2016. Subsequently, the HLA Board had considered the bid at their meeting on 24 May 2016 and had awarded the County Council and their partners a stage one pass and a grant of up to £4.29m split into two phases ie a development phase and a delivery phase. During the delivery phase £333,350 would be received to enable the development of (i) designs for the new history centre to Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 3 standard; (ii) an activity plan in consultation with stakeholders; (iii) Conservation, Management, Maintenance and Business plans together with a Fundraising Strategy and Learning Policy; (iv) calculation of the detailed costings for the delivery stage and (v) further fundraising to secure the remaining £150,000 required.

A Stage 2 application for £3,965,590 would then be submitted to the HLF and members noted the estimated project costs set out in the table contained in the report. In the meantime a start-up meeting of the Project Board was to be held and HLF were to appoint two mentors to assist in the delivery of the scheme. In addition work was to begin on remodelling the Archive and Heritage Service to deliver the Staffordshire History Centre.

In response to a request for clarification, the County Council's Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities said that it was anticipated the Stage 2 application for HLF funding would be submitted in December 2017 following which there would be a three month wait for a decision to issued. Subject to its success it was hoped that construction work on the new Centre would begin in late spring early summer 2018 with the official opening taking place in 2020/2021.

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

(b) That further updates on the project be brought to the Committee as and when required.

7. Date of next meeting - Thursday 17 November 2016 at Stafford

Chairman