

MINUTES

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee Meeting – 16 March 2010

Present: Ben Adams (Chairman), Derek Capey, Ian Parry and Kath Perry

Apologies for absence: Hazel Lyth

PART ONE

8. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16.5

No declarations at this meeting.

9. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2009

RESOLVED – (a) As agreed at the meeting on 3 August 2009 the City Council nominated Mr. Derek Capey as a substitute member to represent the City Council in the event that Ms. Lyth was unavailable. Mr. Capey was welcomed to the meeting.

(b) That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

10. Annual Implementation Plan, 2009-2010: Predicted Outturn Performance (Schedule 1)

The Committee considered the joint report of the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Audit Social Care, Health and Communities on the predicted outturn against the targets in the Joint Archive Service's Annual Implementation Plan for 2009/10.

The Annual Implementation Plan sets the annual targets for the Joint Archive Service. These targets work towards the overall achievement of the Archive Service's three- year service objectives, which were approved by the Joint Archives Committee and set out in the current Forward Plan, 2009-2012. Members noted that the Archive Service had made good progress against its targets.

The Archive Service was now required to submit its annual Implementation Plan and to report on performance against it as part of The National Archives (TNA) Assessment. Performance against the plan was scored accordingly by TNA.

The year 2008-2010 had seen good progress against the individual targets set in the Archive Service Implementation Plan and positive performance in all areas of activity. The Committee noted the Implementation Plan was on target to be completed with no major shortfalls. They also noted the following main areas of good performance for 2009/10 arranged under the current service objectives for 2009 to 2012 included: (a) to put the customer at the heart of service delivery; (b) to build upon our innovative online presence; (c) to engage with Staffordshire's communities to strengthen their sense of identity and place; (d) to engage people of all ages in activities which celebrate and discover Staffordshire's history; (e) maintain and improve service efficiency, impact and

quality; (f) to improve and promote user access to collections; and (g) deliver high quality care of collections.

Members noted the take-up by schools for out of school study sessions had been disappointing and this was due to schools having to buy in cover for these types of activities. They also noted that the Annual Archive Day School, Towards a City (which had been cancelled owing to unforeseen circumstances) would be rearranged for later in the year.

RESOLVED: That the report be received as a record of the predicted performance of the Joint Archive Service for the year ended 31 March 2010.

11. Predicted Outturn 2009/10 and Proposed Revenue Budget 2010/11 (Schedule 2)

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Finance Officer and the City Director of Finance detailing the current predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service and to consider the budget position for 2010/11.

Members noted that the latest revenue outturn forecast showed an overspend of £2,931 at the end of the financial year. The current balance on the General Reserve was £134,036 of which £51,300 had already been earmarked for increased security at Northfields and Lichfield, alterations/environmental controls at Stoke and microfilming of electoral registers. They also noted that approval was sought to earmark up to £5,000 to support adaptations to accommodation at Lichfield Record Office to facilitate archive service public learning events in Lichfield District, volunteer working and training. In total the Committee were asked to agree earmarking of up to £56,300 towards the following:

Security improvements at Northfields outstore	£800
Fire precautions at Northfield	£8,000
Alterations/environmental controls at Stoke	£30,000
Increased security at Lichfield	£4,500
Microfilming of Staffordshire electoral registers	£8,000
Adaptations to accommodation at Lichfield Record Office	£5,000

They noted that approval was sought to earmark a sum of up to £50,000 to support adaptations to a proposed new out-storage for the Archive Service which was currently under consideration. It was also noted that the total sum of £8,800 earmarked for improvements at Northfield may not be required owing to the possible relocation of the Archive Service from this site.

The Archive Acquisition Reserve had a balance of £61,796 towards the purchase of new collections. The proposed revenue budget for 2010/11 of £1,156,550 would be funded by the County Council (77.54%) and the City Council (22.46%). These percentages reflect the respective population levels of the two authorities at June 2008.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the sum of £56,300 be earmarked from the General Reserves for; security improvements and separate adaptations at Lichfield and the Northfield outstore;

upgrading fire precautions at Northfield; alterations/environmental controls at Stoke; and the continuation of the microfilming programme for Staffordshire electoral registers.

(c) That approval be given in principle to the request to earmark a sum up to £50,000 from General Reserves, to support adaptations to a proposed new out-storage facility for the Archive Service, should this sum be required and that the Head of Archive Services consult with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee in this event .

(d) That the revenue budget proposed for 2010/11 be approved and submitted to the County Council and the City Council for consideration.

12. Review of Fees and Charges, 2010/11 (Schedule 3)

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Audit Social Care, Health and Communities for the proposed amendments to the scale of fees and charges to be applied by the Joint Archive Service with effect from 1 May 2010.

The Committee noted that the Archive Service was free at the point of personal use by members of the public visiting its reading rooms. Fees and charges were levied for a variety of additional services which customers choose to use or to buy. The Service uses the income to support its budget and, where possible, any surplus income was re-invested in service improvements.

At its meeting on 23 February 2009, the Joint Committee approved increases in fees and charges to a wide range of services provided by the Archive Service to apply from 1 April 2009. The new level of fees was proposed following a comprehensive review.

In view of the major changes introduced in April 2009 and the relatively low rate of inflation, only limited increases to a few services were proposed for the financial year 2010/2011. The Committee noted the scale of new fees and charges proposed to apply from 1 May 2010 and were informed that they were comparable with other local Archives Services.

RESOLVED – That the fees and charges detailed in Appendix 1 of Schedule 3 to the signed minutes be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service for 1 May 2010.

13. Archive Service Buildings (Schedule 4)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Audit Social Care, Health and Communities presenting an overview of the compliance and performance of the buildings used by the Joint Archive Service.

The Joint Archive Service was a multi-repository service consisting of the Staffordshire County Record Office at Stafford, the Lichfield Record Office at Lichfield Library and Stoke-on-Trent City Archives, based in the City Central Library in Hanley. The Archive Service buildings were owned either by the County Council or the City Council. In addition, the Service leases an archive out-store in Stafford from another County Council directorate.

Archive buildings were required to meet national standards in respect of: the quality of storage for archive collections, including designated Public Records; the provision of accommodation for the public consultation of archive collections; and accommodation to enable staff to carry out the various functions associated with archive work. As such, the buildings were regularly assessed and inspected by The National Archives (TNA).

In the most recent assessment of local authority archive services, carried out by TNA in 2008, the Joint Archive Service was judged to be a four-star service. This makes it one of the leading local authority archive services in England and Wales and in the top ten archive services out of 124 assessed.

Of the five functional areas assessed, the least well-performing area for the Service was in buildings and environment, which was rated as three-star. The Committee noted the detailed update report about the Archive Service's buildings requested as a result of the assessment.

The Committee noted that the Archive Service had developed a business case to establish a digital archive repository for the storage of archives being deposited with the Service in electronic form and to ensure public access to such archives. Discussions with the County Council's ICT services were now in progress. The Chairman requested that a further update on progress be brought to the next Committee.

Options were currently being considered around the need to improve the quality of the Service's out-storage. Detailed adaptation costs were currently being prepared for these options and permission had been sought for the use of funding from the General Reserve to support adaptation costs if required (see minute number 11).

RESOLVED - (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the progress and actions in relation to the Archive Service's buildings be noted.

14. Proposed Application for Designation of Collections (Schedule 5)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Audit Social Care, Health and Communities to consider whether an application should be made under the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council Designation Scheme for the designation of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Service collections in their entirety.

The Committee noted that the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) operate a designation scheme which celebrates collections considered to be of outstanding national, and possibly international, significance.

The scheme was extended in 2005 to include archives and libraries. The primary criteria for designation of collections were Quality and Significance. The secondary criteria were Collections Management and Service to the Public. The benefits associated with designated status include an enhanced ability to attract external funding and a real opportunity to raise the profile of a service. Designated status should also afford an ongoing commitment of support from governing bodies.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent enjoy an outstanding archival heritage, which constitutes a primary record of over 1,000 years of history. This archival heritage was now in the care of the Joint Archive Service. The core strength of these archive collections lies in their huge variety and diversity, reflecting, as they do, a County which made such a significant contribution to the economic, industrial, political, religious and social history of Britain. There were also many superb individual collections, some of which were internationally renowned.

The quality, range and significance of the collections held by the Joint Archive Service suggest that it would be appropriate to make an application for the designation of the collections in their entirety. The Service believes that it could also demonstrate the necessary commitment to collections management and public access. The Committee agreed that applying for Designation of Collections would show commitment and would be advantageous to, and raise the profile of, the Joint Archive Service in Staffordshire.

RESOLVED – (a) That an application be made under the Designation Scheme for Museums, Libraries and Archives for the designation of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service holdings in their entirety.

(b) That the application be submitted by 27 September 2010 for consideration by the Designation Panel in January 2011.

15. Making A Difference: Revision of Access, Audience Development and Learning Policy and Strategy (Schedule 6)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Community Services seeking approval to the proposed revision to Making A Difference: the Access, Audience Development and Learning Policy and Strategy.

The Committee noted that at its meeting on 15 November 2007, the Joint Archives Committee approved a revised and expanded Access, Audience Development and Learning Policy and Strategy for the Joint Archive Service. Audience development was brought into the remit of the policy because of its close inter-relationship with access and learning.

Access, audience development and learning continues to be one of the most significant and wide-ranging areas of work for the Joint Archive Service, since engagement with archives flows directly from the fundamental collecting activity of the Service.

The policy direction seeks to build on the positive progress, which the Joint Service had made, while also recognising the need to expand locality working and to work as closely as they were able with local communities and community groups. It also reiterates the importance of not neglecting areas of current strength and support, which lie with lifelong learners and older people.

The policy aims were structured to reflect clearly the generic social and learning outcomes of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's Inspiring Learning Improvement Framework. The strategic objectives of the policy build upon existing achievements and encapsulate achievable aspirations for the Service.

Following further discussion on the Policy and Strategy for Access, Audience Development and Learning the Committee suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on the supporting links from the policy to the County Council and the City Council's aims and priorities.

RESOLVED – that the revised Policy and Strategy for Access, Audience Development and Learning for the Joint Archive Service be updated following comments made by the Committee and the revised policy be circulated to all Members of the Committee for their approval.

16. Collecting Policy (Schedule 7)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Community Services seeking approval for a revision to the Collecting Policy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Services.

The location, collection and preservation of archive collections was a core function of an archive service and a collecting policy was essential to define and support this function. It was especially important for a multi-repository (multi-record office) archive service, as is the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, so that it was clear to the owners of archive collections and the public which of the Archive Service's three record offices were responsible for the collection of archives for particular areas of the County.

National standards for archive services require that a collecting policy be approved by the Service's governing body. The current Collecting Policy for the Archive Service was approved by the Joint Archives Committee at its meeting on 3 September 2008.

Although not yet due for review, the Collecting Policy had been updated in line with current best practice. The substance remains largely unchanged but some paragraphs had been amplified. The policy had also been redrafted in layout and style to match the model guidance issued by the National Archives.

RESOLVED – That the revised Collecting Policy for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, Appendix 1 of Schedule 7 to the signed minutes, be approved.

17. Preservation and Conservation Policy (Schedule 8)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Community Services seeking approval for a revision to the Preservation and Conservation Policy of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service.

Stewardship, that is the preservation and conservation of archives, was a core function of the Joint Archive Service. These responsibilities follow from the fundamental collecting activity of the Service. The Preservation and Conservation Policy was therefore a key and underpinning policy document.

National standards for archive services require that their preservation policy be approved by the Service's governing body. The last revision was carried out in 2004 with minor amendments in 2009.

The content of the policy remains largely unchanged but it had been redrafted and simplified in layout and style to match the other policies of the Archive Service more closely. There were some additions which reflect recent changes and improvements in service provision.

The Committee noted the revised Preservation and Conservation Policy and the supporting information leaflet, In Safe Keeping, issued to all new users of the Joint Archive Service.

RESOLVED - That the revised Preservation and Conservation Policy for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, Appendix 1 to Schedule 8 to the signed minutes, be approved.

18. Policy on Use of Archives by the Media (Schedule 9)

The Committee considered a joint report the Director of Communities and the Chief Executive's Office and the Director of Community Services seeking approval for the proposed Policy for the Use of Archives by the Media.

Archives were being used increasingly by different sections of the media to help to illustrate and interpret the past. The Archive Service welcomes media interest in the use of its collections in television programmes, films and articles in the local, national and commercial press.

A number of issues surround the use of archives in this way and at present the Archive Service uses written guidelines to inform the use of archives by the media. This policy draws these issues together in a formal way to provide a clear framework to guide both Archive Service staff and the media.

Advice on the policy had been sought from the respective Heads of Communications in both the County Council and the City Council.

RESOLVED - That the proposed Policy for the Use of Archives by the Media, Appendix 1 to Schedule 9 to the signed minutes, be approved.

19. Date of next meeting – 17 June 2010 (Stoke-on-Trent)

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday 17 June 2010 at 2.00 pm at the Gladstone Pottery Museum, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent.

**Ben Adams
Chairman**

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.