

**STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE ON TRENT JOINT ARCHIVES COMMITTEE  
17 JUNE 2010**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S  
OFFICE AND THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE,  
HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES**

**DIGITAL ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS: PRESERVATION AND ACCESS**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Joint Committee of progress made towards provision by the Joint Archive Service for the future preservation of born digital archives and for future public access to them.

**2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Records, especially those of public bodies which are eventually deposited with the Joint Archive Service under legislation, are increasingly being created in digital format. The long-term preservation of these records and ensuring that the public can continue to access them in the future presents an important challenge for the Service.
- 2.2 In preparation for this, in 2007 the Joint Archive Service developed a digital archive policy and strategy. This set out a framework to work towards establishing formal arrangements for the secure storage and proper management of born digital archives. Significant progress has been made in the last three years.
- 2.3 Work has been completed on defining protocols and procedures for the receipt and accessioning of deposited digital archives. In addition, the Archive Service has now reached a major and significant milestone, in having established a digital archive repository, that is the provision of secure server space for the storage of archives in electronic format.
- 2.4 Work is continuing on establishing public access protocols which will be compliant with the County Council and City Council's ICT security requirements.

**3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That the actions taken to date in establishing arrangements for the future preservation of deposited digital archive collections be noted.
- 3.2 That discussions continue to take place to identify the long-term funding implications for archive collections in digital format.

## **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Local authority archive services have a responsibility to provide formal and long-term preservation for records deposited under a wide range of archive legislation and to ensure public access to these records. The legislation includes: the Public Records Acts, 1957 and 1968; the Local Government Act, 1972; and the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978 (amended 1992). In addition the Archive Service is also empowered to collect archive collections from a range of other organisations and individuals under the Local Government (Records) Act, 1962.
- 4.2 Until relatively recently such records have been in hard copy format. However increasingly some archives are now being created as 'born digital' records, that is records which have originated and which only exist in electronic format. This is especially the case with public bodies, although other organisations, such as the Anglican Church and local societies for example, have also begun to create digital records.
- 4.3 The same legislative responsibilities are placed on the Archive Service, irrespective of the format of the archives themselves. The Archive Service must therefore be able to respond to the age of digital record keeping and to ensure that archives are not lost for the future because of they are in electronic format. One of the key recommendations of the new national archive strategy, Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2009, brought to the Committee at its meeting on 3 August 2009, is to ensure that digital information is accessible now and remains so in the future.
- 4.4 The Archive Service therefore needs to provide both physical and virtual archive storage for the foreseeable future. At the present time, the rate of future accessions deposited in digital form cannot be estimated.
- 4.5 In 2007 the Archive Service developed its first digital preservation policy. This set out the fundamental objective of achieving secure storage and proper management of digital archives, received on deposit from external depositors.
- 4.6 Formal arrangements for the preservation of the County Council's permanent archives in digital format are addressed through the continuing rollout of its electronic document records management system. These processes are managed by the Information Governance Unit. In the City Council, retention schedules are in place for the City Council's records including electronic records.
- 4.7 To date progress has been made on establishing accessioning protocols and drawing up Terms of Deposit for digital records, which mirror the terms used for the deposit of hard copy archives but which also provide essential technical information for intending depositors and for the Archive Service. Advice from Staffordshire ICT has been provided on acceptable file formats for long term storage and migration. In addition a business case setting out the case for a digital archive repository, that is server space to store securely digital archives and to enable their future migration, was also developed.
- 4.8 Given that the physical storage requirements for deposited archives have been met in the past from corporate funding, this raises the question of how virtual storage for deposited digital archives should be funded in the future. This issue has yet to be addressed fully or resolved. However there is some

urgency in moving the digital archive repository forward, as the Archive Service has now started to receive deposits of archives in electronic form.

- 4.9 The Joint Archive Service currently has an allocation of 100 Gigabytes of pre-paid server space, which was negotiated in 2008, primarily for the long-term storage of digitised images created as part of the Sutherland Papers Project. This space has been paid for until December 2018 and provides the following: online storage, on fast network accessible disks with resilience and backup, with offsite storage. There is enough spare capacity (35 Gigabytes) to begin to store deposited digital records from external sources. This has been identified as an immediate solution for the safe storage of digital records, which have been deposited recently with the Joint Archive Service.
- 4.10 The use of this space will allow the Archive Service to manage and store digital deposits of archives likely to be received within the next three to four years. Compression of the Sutherland Project images, already stored in this space, will also enable the server space to be maximised. This solution will also mean that records will be migrated to new electronic formats in the future as part of Staffordshire ICT's ongoing server management.
- 4.11 It is the intention that the public would initially consult deposited archives in electronic format at Staffordshire Record Office in the same way in which they would consult other documents. Work is still continuing to ensure that this can be done in full compliance with ICT security protocols. In the longer term networked or remote solutions may be put in place for Lichfield Record Office and Stoke on Trent City Archives. However, initially access at these offices could be made available by the physical transfer of copy data following agreed security protocols. The Archive Service is also seeking advice from the very few local authority archive services who are making progress on this work.
- 4.12 The work of the Joint Archive Service towards digital preservation is scored as part of the National Archives Assessment of Local Authority Archive Services, due to be carried out again in June/July 2011. Given that the preservation of digital archives is one of the key recommendations of the new national archive strategy, it is therefore important that the Joint Archive Service is able to show that it is making progress in this area of work.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Staffordshire ICT is in the process of developing models for funding incremental growth of IT services. Currently storage space is funded corporately within a service level agreement. Significant additional storage demands which can not be subsumed within planned storage capacity will require funding.
- 5.2 The principle of whether the costs of storing deposited digital archives in the future are to be met corporately, in the same way that the physical storage of archive collections is currently funded corporately, will therefore require further discussion.
- 5.3 There will be no additional cost to the Archive Service to utilise the space discussed at paragraph 4.7 and this space can be made available immediately.

## **6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no equal opportunities implications in this report.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Details of the legislation relating to the preservation of archives is set out at paragraph 4.1. The legislative responsibilities of the Joint Archive Service remain the same, irrespective of the format of the archives.

**Helen Riley, Director of Communities and Chief Executive's Office**  
**Tony Oakman, Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Communities**

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**Background Documents:** Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service:  
Digital Preservation Policy, 2007, updated 2010  
Project Business Case: Archive Service: Digital  
Repository, 2009

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