

Annual Governance Statement

1. Area of responsibility

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee is responsible for carrying out its business in line with the law and proper accounting standards, and for using public money economically, efficiently and effectively, and properly accounting for it. We also have a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to continually review and improve the way we work, while at the same time offering value for money and an efficient and effective service.

To meet this overall responsibility, we have put in place proper arrangements for overseeing what we do (this is what we mean by governance). These arrangements mean that we can carry out our responsibilities effectively, including our arrangements for managing risk.

This governance statement meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework is basically the systems and processes, and the culture and values, by which we are controlled and through which we answer to, get involved with and lead the Partnership. The framework allows us to monitor the achievement of our long-term objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is an important part of that framework and we have designed it to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot remove all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, so it can only offer reasonable protection. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- Identify and prioritise the risks that could prevent us from achieving our policies, aims and objectives;
- Assess the likelihood of those risks happening and the effect if they did; and
- Manage those risks efficiently, effectively and economically.

We have had the governance framework in place for the year ended 31 March 2010 and up to the date the statement of accounts were approved.

3. The governance framework

The Joint Committee's governance framework is established by the Joint Agreement for Archive Services, between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council. The purpose of the Joint Agreement is to:

- (i) **Enable Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council to discharge their functions with regard to Archive Services for the benefit of citizens and service users and in accordance with:**

- The Local Government Acts, 1972 and 1992
- The Local Government (Records) Act, 1962
- The Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967
- The Manorial Documents Rules 1959

- The Tithe Rules, 1960
- The Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992)
- The Data Protection Act, 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- The National Archives Standard for Record Repositories, 2004

The functions of the Joint Committee are as follows:

- to ensure that the Joint Archive Service delivers its role as defined by the Joint Agreement for Archive Services
- to administer the Staffordshire Record Office, the Lichfield Record Office and Stoke - on -Trent City Archives
- to make recommendations to Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council on revenue and capital estimates
- to determine policies and standards for the Joint Service in accordance with appropriate national and international standards for archives
- to monitor the performance of the Joint Service by means of an Annual Report and other performance reports brought to the Joint Committee
- to determine the collecting policy and to receive information about acquisitions of archives
- to acquire documents by loan, gift or purchase within the collecting policy
- to promote the use and value of archives through a range of public and outreach services
- to facilitate the joint development of the Archive Service to make the best uses or resources through co-ordinated activity, including external bidding where appropriate
- to promote and develop specialised professional and technical services in the cost-effective provision of the Archive Service
- to employ in the Archive Service such staff as the Committee may determine will facilitate the most efficient and effective delivery of archive functions and services
- to undertake any related activities which the joint Committee consider to be of benefit to archives in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

The Joint Committee manages the role of the Archive Service by means of its operational policies and procedures and by regular monitoring. The role of the Archive Service is delivered and progressed by means of a three-year Forward Plan, which is considered and approved by the Joint Committee and which sets out its vision and its strategic objectives for the Archive Service.

The Joint Committee monitors the performance and progress of the Archive Service by means of reporting to its regular meetings. Standing orders for the Joint Committee are set out in the Joint Agreement.

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, all media operating in Staffordshire receive each Joint Committee agenda and are invited to attend each meeting.

Support services for the Joint Committee include the provision of financial, legal and administrative services by Staffordshire County Council. Support services for the Archive Service including the provision of financial and legal services are provided by the County Council and the City Council respectively.

(ii) **Review of the Joint Committee's purpose and functions**

The Joint Agreement for Archives Services is a nine-year rolling term agreement. The last formal review of the Joint Agreement was in 2003 when Stoke on Trent City Council changed its Executive Arrangements. There have been no substantive changes or additions to archive legislation which might have impacted on the Joint Committee's governance arrangements.

The Joint Archive Service is a partnership which works hard to deliver an integrated archive service and to ensure that joint working produces measurable and cost-effective outcomes for archive service users. This is regularly demonstrated through the ongoing work carried on by the Archive Service to maintain compliance with The National Archives Assessment and the Customer Excellence Standard (see below).

(iii) **Measure the quality of services for users, and ensure they are delivered in accordance with the Joint Committee's objectives and that they represent the best use of resources**

Performance measurement comprises of:

External assessment:

The National Archives Assessment of Local Authority Archive Services. Currently the Service is rated as a 4* service and 10th out of 124 services (2008 assessment- new assessment due June/ July 2010)

The Customer Service Excellence Standard (CSE). The Charter Mark Standard has been held successively by the Service since 1998. Re-assessment against the newly developed replacement for Charter Mark, the CSE Standard, is due in December 2010.

Customer assessment

The Public Services Quality Group Survey of Visitors to British Archives is carried out every 18 months and provides key measurement information on: advance information; web site; opening hours; physical access to buildings; visitor facilities; catalogues, indexes leaflets; document delivery; microform facilities; copy services; on-site IT facilities; quality of staff's advice; helpfulness and friendliness of staff; and customer satisfaction overall

Key local performance indicators for service provision and delivery also provide information to enable the impact of service developments to be measured. Outcomes from externally funded projects are measured against initial project objectives and reported on to external funders.

(iv) **Ensure the economical, effective and efficient use of resources**

The budget is approved annually by the Joint Committee. Regular reports on the revenue budget are brought to the Committee during the year. The Archive Service adheres to Staffordshire County Council's and Stoke on Trent City Council's procurement strategies, which are instrumental in ensuring value for money in the delivery of the Service's activities. A successful track record of winning external funding has ensured the delivery of large scale projects.

(v) **Define and document roles and responsibilities with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication**

The Joint Agreement for Archive Services sets out the roles of and relationships between the partners and the financial management arrangements. . It also sets out the delegations of powers to the Head of the Archive Service and other officers. The Agreement requires that all decisions of the Joint Committee, or taken by or on behalf of the Joint Committee, are made in accordance with the principles and standing orders set out in the Joint Agreement.

(vi) Develop, communicate and embed codes of conduct, define standards of behaviour for members and staff

All staff members working for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Service are Staffordshire County Council or Stoke-on-Trent City Council employees and are therefore subject to the same codes of conduct and standards of behaviour as set out by the two Councils.

Members of the Joint Committee are subject to the codes of conduct and standards of behaviour which have been developed, communicated and embedded by the partner and supporting authorities that they have been elected to represent.

(vii) Review and update standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals, which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks

Financial management is based upon Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council's framework of regular management information, financial regulations, contract standing orders and a structure of delegation, sub-delegation, and accountability as set out in the Agreement.

The County Council's Director of Finance is responsible for conducting a continuous internal audit in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006. The County Council maintains an adequate and effective internal audit function, which operates in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2006. Specialist services such as computer and contract audit are purchased from the private sector. The Assistant Director (Audit and Risk Management Services) has the right to report directly to the Chairman and to any member of the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee prepares its accounts in accordance with professional guidance as determined by the County Council's Director of Finance.

The Partnership maintains a Programme Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan, containing formal risk assessment, risk log, risk mitigation and management plan, supported by a risk profile. It also makes reference to Partnership system and information security and individual project risk assessments, logs and management plans. These are reported annually in full to the Committee.

(viii) Undertake the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities

Following on from the comments made at (vii) above, no formal audit committee is in place. All internal audit reports with a "Limited" Assurance opinion are reported to the Joint Committee for information. The Joint Committee is the body charged with governance of the Partnership.

(ix) Ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful

In its role as Lead Authority, key roles are performed by Staffordshire County Council's statutory officers, including the Head of Paid Service (the Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer).

A programme of work is carried out by Staffordshire County Council's Internal Audit Section, reviewing compliance with established procedures – increasingly this work is being linked to operational risk and not just financial risk. In addition, External Audit reviews the Joint Committee's compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations.

(x) Whistle-blowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public

Any complaints would be handled in accordance with the County Council and the City Council's formal complaints procedures. Any complaint about an elected member in his/her capacity as a member of Joint Committee would be a matter for the Standards Board for England.

As described at (vi) above, all staff members working for the Joint Archive Service are Staffordshire County Council or Stoke-on-Trent City Council employees and therefore subject to the provisions made with the County Council/City Council Whistle-blowing Policy.

(xi) Identify the development needs of members and senior officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training

The development needs and support for the members of the Joint Committee are provided for by the supporting authorities that they have been elected to represent.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

This is the first year that an Annual Governance Statement has been prepared for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee.

Signed:

Dated:

Signed:

Dated: