

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

Present: Terry Follows (Vice-Chairman), Mike Davies (Invitee/Observer) and
Gill Heath

PART ONE

8. Apologies

Ben Adams; Ian Parry

9. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

11. Predicted Outturn 2016/17

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Finance and Resources (Staffordshire County Council) and the City Director of Resources – Assistant Chief Executive (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) (schedule 1 to the signed minutes) detailing the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2016/17.

Members noted that the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service was a spend of £715,547 against an approved budget of £717,760. This gave a predicted overall underspend of £2,213 which would be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the year. The balance in the General Reserve was currently £28,233.

Members also noted that the balance in the Archive Acquisition Reserve, which enabled the service to purchase collections for the benefit of residents of both the City and County, was £57,542.

In response to a request for clarification from the Chairman, the Director of Finance and Resources re-iterated that any underspend at the end of the financial year would be transferred to the Joint Archive Services' General Reserve and not clawed back into central budgets at the two authorities.

RESOLVED – That the report, detailing the predicted outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2016/17, be received and noted.

12. Review of Fees and Charges 2017/18

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) (schedule 2 to the signed minutes) on a review of fees and charges to be implemented from April 2017.

Members noted that the Archive Service's fees and charges had been reviewed on an annual basis for a number of years to adapt to changes in demand and cost of service provision. The level of fees and charges set was based on various considerations including (i) staff time involved in delivering the service; (ii) the cost of equipment and associated maintenance; (iii) postage costs; (iv) the prevailing economic climate; (v) technology and (vi) the availability of resources online.

Income streams for the Service included (i) photocopying; (ii) sale of photographic permits; (iii) research, transcription and certification; (iv) sales of publications; (v) donations and; (vi) fees for talks and group visits. In addition, from 2014, income had been received from a partnership with a commercial provider to make key archive collections available electronically on line.

It was intended that a balanced approach would be adopted for the review to encourage use of services whilst ensuring that income generated supported the cost of their provision. Benchmarking had also been undertaken with neighbouring archive services.

Members noted that since the publication of Parish Registers, wills and marriage bonds online with the Find My Past initiative, the Archive Service had experienced a fall in traditional income from photocopying and research. Whilst royalties were received from online services these had not been sufficient to offset these reductions.

The proposed main changes for 2017 included (i) an increase in photocopying charges and (ii) commercial reproduction. In addition, it was proposed that the cost of a daily photographic permit be also increased.

During the discussion which ensued, the Chairman asked whether the revised fees and charges were likely to have a detrimental effect of on demand thus reducing the total level of income received. In reply the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities referred to the benchmarking against other Local Authorities' level of fees and charges which had been undertaken. However, he acknowledged that income from copying had decreased in recent years owing, in part, to the availability of archive services on the web, and the proposed increase in photography permits would help to offset this.

Members then expressed their support for implementing the revised schedule of fees and charges as set out in the report having regard to the length of time since they had last been reviewed.

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

(b) That the fees and charges (proposed in Appendix two to the report) be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service from April 2017.

13. Minton Archive Project

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) (schedule 3 to the signed minutes) which provided an update on the Minton Archive Project.

The Minton Archive (which comprised the records of Minton and Royal Doulton Plc) had been given by the Art Fund to the Stoke-on-Trent City in March 2015. The collection continued to attract national and international attention and the Service's commitment to make the whole of the archive accessible would remain a priority over the next few years.

Members noted that following a successful bid to the National Manuscript Conservation Trust for funding for a conservator to undertake a programme of work on some of the most significant items in the archive, Jessica Hyslop had commenced employment with the Service in August 2016.

The Minton Archive website www.themintonarchive.org.uk had been the focus of the Service's continuing work on the collection. Originally the site had contained approximately 80 images whereas now it included over 1000 high quality scans and videos. The Digital Development Officer who was responsible for curating the site had established a regular pattern of updates which encouraged repeated visits to the site and engagement from the audience. Total page views from October 2015 to October 2016 were 52,392 with almost 4,500 unique users from 90 countries and all continents around the world including Antarctica.

There were approximately 500 boxes of volumes, papers and promotional material in the archive which were currently uncatalogued. An application had therefore been made to the National Cataloguing Grant Programme (NCGP) in June 2016 for a grant of £37,000 to fund an archivist's post for a year enabling the Stoke Archivist, who had experience of pottery archives and extensive project working, to undertake this work.

Members were pleased to note that the application had been successful with the full bid amount being awarded. It was anticipated that work would start on cataloguing the archive as soon as the necessary formal approvals from the NCGP had been received and they paid tribute to the work of staff who had been involved in this project.

During the discussion which ensued, Members requested an opportunity to view a selection of items from the archive. In reply the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities undertook to make the necessary arrangements for this to happen at their next meeting which would be held in Stoke-on-Trent.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

14. Stafford History Centre Project

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) (schedule 4 to the signed minutes) which provided an update on the progress of the Staffordshire History Centre Project.

The Archive and Heritage Service submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on 11 February 2016 for a Staffordshire History Centre comprising accommodation for records (some of which were 1,000 years old), a new community exhibition space, modern search rooms and strong rooms to provide storage for an additional 25 years of future collections.

The HLF Board had considered the bid at their meeting on 24 May 2016 and had awarded a grant of £4.29m to the County Council and their partner, the William Salt Library Trust for the project. This grant was split into two phases ie a Development Phase and a Delivery Phase. During the Development phase £333,350 would be received to enable (i) designs for the new centre to be prepared to Royal Institute of British Architects Stage 3 standard; (ii) an activity plan to be developed in consultation with stakeholders; (iii) Conservation, Management, Maintenance and Business Plans to be drawn-up together with a Fundraising Strategy and Learning Policy; (iv) the calculation of the detailed costings for the delivery stage and (v) further fundraising to secure the remaining £150,000 match funding required. In addition, a second application would be submitted to the HLF to secure the remaining £3,965,590 required for the Delivery Phase. However, Members noted that submission of this application would be delayed until early 2018.

Since June 2016 the Staffordshire History Centre Project Board and team (SHC) had been working to submit an application to HLF for formal permission to start. Members noted that this permission had been received on 3 November 2016 enabling the agreed funding to be released. Also, the project team and partners had met with the HLF Grants Officer and the two mentors in September 2016 to receive Project Briefs and advice on changes necessary to ensure delivery against the approved purposes of the HLF grant.

Since the above mentioned start-up meeting had been held, the Project Briefs had been revised together with the job descriptions for two project posts (Project Support Officer and Community History Development Officer). The job descriptions had been submitted to the job evaluation panel for assessment and the vacancies advertised. It was anticipated that shortlisting of applications to the two post would be undertaken in mid to late January 2017.

In response to a question from a Member the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities said that the two posts would be for the duration of the Development Stage of the project.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

15. Collections Information and Access Policies

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and the Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) (schedule 5 to the signed minutes) seeking approval to the Archive Service's Collections Information and Access policies.

The Committee noted that, at their meeting on 26 March 2015, it was resolved the Archive Service should apply for Archive Service Accreditation. As part of the accreditation process the Service had created two new policies (Collections Information Policy and Access Policy) to meet the requirements of the standard.

The County Museum Service, which formed part of the County's Archive and Heritage Service, was also renewing its application to hold the Museum Accreditation Standard.

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

The Collections Information Policy detailed the policies and processes in place to ensure that collections were documented properly from the time of their receipt into the care of the Archive Service, and included:

- 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.

The Access Policy detailed how access was provided to Archive and Heritage Service Collections, information on restrictions to access, where charges might apply and links to other relevant policies. It also 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.

The Access Policy provided links to other policies, guidelines and content to direct people to more information. Appended to the policy was the Service Charter which contained standards of service that customers could expect.

It was noted that approval of these policies by the governing body was a requirement of both the Archive and Museum Accreditation Standards. The policies would also support the planning of improvements to collections information and widening access to collections.

During the discussion which ensued a Member queried whether the two Policies took account of the specific needs of disabled people. In reply the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Families and Communities said that all of the Archives and Heritage Service buildings were compliant with the requirements of the Disabilities Act 2014. However, there was no need for reference to be made in these policies as provision had been made elsewhere.

The Member representative of the County Council highlighted the valuable work undertaken by volunteers in the running of the Archive and Heritage Service without which it would not have been such a success. In reply, the Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged their contribution and said that recognition of this was made in the Service's Annual Report. In addition the Authorities hosted a joint annual Christmas party to which all volunteers were invited.

The Chairman sought clarification of the security arrangements for displays and exhibitions in particular at the City Museum during a period of refurbishment. In reply the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities said that artefacts and historical documents were always displayed in lockable cases to prevent damage and/or theft.

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

(b) That the Collections Information and Access policies be approved.

16. Date of next meeting - Thursday 9 February 2017 at 10.00 am, City Centre Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday, 9 February 2017 at the City Centre Library, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent commencing at 10.30 am.

Chairman