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| Members Interest |
| N/A |

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 15 June 2017

Report on Archive Accreditation Standard

Recommendation(s)

1. That the report is noted by the Committee.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Customer Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The final stage of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service's application process for the Archive Service Accreditation scheme took place on 26 May 2017 with an Inspection visit by three external assessors. The result of our application will be made known in July.

Background

Archive Service Accreditation

3. At its meeting on 26 March 2015, the Committee gave approval for the Joint Archive Service to seek Accreditation under the National Archives 'Archive Service Accreditation' scheme which had been launched in 2013 and is being rolled out to all archive services in England. The proposed timetable of submission in 2016 was delayed on the advice of the National Archives to enable the service to complete its plans for the Staffordshire History Centre and submit the HLF application.

4. Archive Service Accreditation was introduced by the National Archives (TNA) in 2015 to serve two purposes. The first is to provide a standard for archives to help them manage and improve their efficiency through identifying good practice and providing external validation. The second is to enable the National Archives to fulfil its statutory functions relating to Places of Deposit.

5. A Place of Deposit is the specific term used to designate locations that the National Archive (TNA) will permit to hold records which fall within the scope of the Public Records Act 1958, at a local level. Such records form a significant part of the holdings of the Archive Service and include the records of hospitals and health, railways, mines, the courts, the coroner and a number of other smaller central government functions.

6. Up to now, becoming a Place of Deposit has involved a separate inspection by TNA. The Archive Service was inspected in 2013 and fully approved. In future, retaining the status of Place of Deposit will be tied to having and retaining Archive Service Accreditation.

7. Being an accredited Service and retaining Place of Deposit status are both prerequisites for the Archive Service to apply for grants and funding from external bodies with knowledge of the sector. In particular the success of Staffordshire History Centre Project would be jeopardised were the Service to fail to gain accreditation.

8. The standard is comprehensive and demanding. It covers

- Organisational Health comprising: Governance and Management structures; Forward Planning; Resource, physical, financial and workforce
- Collections Management comprising: Collections Development, Collections Information and Collections Care and Conservation
- Stakeholders and their experiences comprising: Access Policies; Access Plans (understanding the communities it serves); Access information, procedures and plans (includes both cataloguing and education and outreach activities)

9. The Archive Service started preparation for Accreditation under the scheme from a high base performance. In the assessment regime which preceded the Accreditation, also administered by TNA, the Archive Service was rated a top performing service (4*) and was ranked 10th out of all 124 English local authority archive services in 2010.

10. Since the Committee's approval to seek Accreditation in March 2015, the Archive Service has reviewed, updated and where necessary improved its policies and procedures. In December 2016 the Committee approved the Collections Information policy which consolidated several previous policies in order to align with the Accreditation framework

11. The application process took the form of a submission of documents followed by an assessment visit by three external assessors with deep knowledge of the archival sector. Positive feedback on the quality of the document submission was received and the assessment visit concentrated on the following issues:

- The Staffordshire History Centre project and how the whole service, including Stoke on Trent City Archives will benefit.
- Governance arrangements including the Joint Agreement, reporting lines within the two authorities and support from members, day to day management of the Service.
- Digital preservation and the work done by the Service to develop policies and procedures.
- Support from volunteers particularly noting the high number that the Service has.
- Tour of strongrooms and public facilities at Staffordshire Record Office.

- Discussion of collections management and development.

12. The external assessors will make a report to the Archive Service Accreditation Panel and the result of the Archive Service's application will be provided in July.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

None

Legal implications:

Archive Accreditation is a requirement by 2017 for Places of Deposit.

Resource and Value for money implications:

There are no implications if the application for accreditation is successful. External funding and grant funding would be more difficult to access if the application for accreditation is unsuccessful

Risk implications:

Given the Archive Service's previously recognised high performance, the risk of failure to gain accreditation is assessed as low. However the effect on the Staffordshire History Centre Project, and the linked closure of Lichfield Record Office and relocation of the William Salt Library would be severe

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

| Papers | Contact/Directorate/ext number |
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Archive Accreditation Standard

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation.htm>

