

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee

11 November 2021

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Pandemic 'War Diary'

Recommendation(s)

1. That the committee notes the update on the Pandemic 'War Diary' project.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

Summary

2. Work on developing Pandemic 'War Diary' is in progress, with a Project Assistant post to be advertised in December 2021.
3. Funded by Staffordshire County Council, the project builds on the Archives and Heritage Service's 'Lockdown Memories' project to record Staffordshire's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

4. The Pandemic 'War Diary' project has 3 aims:
 - to capture the official record of Staffordshire County Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic which will be transferred to the Archive and Heritage Service as a resource for future research;
 - to undertake an oral history project to capture the experience of SCC members and officers during the pandemic;
 - to produce a publicly accessible book/brochure to share the story of how SCC managed the response and create a legacy.
5. The Archive and Heritage team will work with the Corporate Services directorate to identify and select records for archival preservation in either digital format or hard copy. This will include the Corporate Operations team (who provide business support, information governance and the civil contingencies unit), Communications team, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, Member and Democratic Services. These teams are likely to have created the minutes, corporate updates and policies recording key decisions taken to respond to the pandemic.

6. We will complete an oral history project engaging our workforce and members to record their experience of the Pandemic. A Project Assistant will be appointed to record the interviews, collect testimonies and necessary permissions. These will be added to our existing oral history and archive collections.

7. A freelance historian will be commissioned to work alongside the oral history Project Assistant to research and write the book.

8. Through the 'Lockdown Memories' project we are identifying items which could be donated to the archive and heritage service and we will appeal to the community for people to take part in the oral history project. To date we have received over 140 responses across the county. Also as part of 'Lockdown Memories', some respondents have taken part in workshops delivered by an artist and the Staffordshire poet laureate. 'Lockdown Memories' has also delivered three schools' workshops (Westlands, Cooper Perry and Perton).

9. These items and those from the corporate record will form the basis for an exhibition in March 2024. It is deliberately later in date to enable some distance from the pandemic and avoid COVID fatigue which could occur as communities want to move on and recover.

10. The job description and person specification for the Pandemic War Diary Project Assistant post has been completed and is currently being evaluated so that a grade can be assigned to the role. The post will be advertised in December once this process is complete.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

None applicable.

Legal implications:

None applicable.

Resource and Value for money implications:

Funded by Staffordshire County Council

Risk implications:

There is a risk of a lack of candidates for the Project Assistant post. As well as WM Jobs, advertisements will be shared through sector jobs desks, e-lists and newsletters. There is a small risk that there will be limited numbers of SCC staff and members willing to take part. However, we have already assembled an initial list of interviewees through preparations for the Pandemic War Diary Project and through the 'Lockdown Memories'.

Climate Change implications:

None applicable

Health Impact Assessment screening:

None applicable

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Pandemic War diary briefing notes	
Lockdown Memories project files and research	