

**Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee
meeting held on 15 June 2017**

Present:

M. Davies (Observer)
Mrs. G. Heath
A. Munday

PART ONE

22. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

RESOLVED – (a) That Mrs. G. Heath be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in June 2018.

(b) That Mr. A. Munday be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year until the next Annual Meeting in June 2018.

23. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest.

24. Minutes of meeting held on 9 February 2017

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

25. Joint Archives Services: Annual Report 2016/17

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources (Stoke-on-Trent City Council), giving details of the Annual Report for 2016/17 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes) which had been produced in accordance with the Joint Agreement.

The Annual Report provided an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

This was the second year in the current three-year planning cycle for the service. The report highlighted some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the service within the current Forward Plan 2015-2018 including:- (i) developing an active partnership approach; (ii) delivering resilience and sustainability; (iii) reaching an engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences; (iv) sharing knowledge across the UK and; (v) increasing online presence and remote access.

It had been a very productive year for the service in terms of performance, achievements and associated activity with the most notable successes being (i) the award of a stage 1 Heritage Lottery pass for the Staffordshire History Centre and (ii) acquisition and cataloguing of collections such as the Minton Archive.

With regard to (i) above, a project Board and Project Team had been established comprising representatives of both Authorities, William Salt Library Trustees, Friends Group and other stakeholders. The first phase of the project had focussed on the appointment of consultants and a design team in order to develop the proposals. In the coming year, plans were to be prepared in readiness for submission of a Phase 2 application. The Archive Service is to undertake further fund raising to meet a £150,000 match funding requirement and Friends Groups would seek to raise £50,000. Subject to these amounts being raised, £3.9m would become available from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

With regard to (ii) above, following a negotiation between the City Archivist and the Trustees of the Queen's Royal Lancers, the archive of the 16th/5th Lancers, a regiment long associated with the County and the City had been deposited with the Archive Service to be held at Stoke-on-Trent City Archives.

Overall, the proportion of catalogues which had either been fully or partially made available on line had increased by 1.6% to 94.38% of all collections currently held by the service.

With regard to take-up of services by the public, 2016/17 had seen further falls in personal visits to reading rooms by 20% and hits on the Archive Service's main website by 8.3%. However, visits to Staffordshire Names Indexes and Minton Archive Microsite had increased by 13.8%. In addition, the number of volunteers remained high at 124 which totalled 8,516 hours or 4.4 full time equivalent members of staff. Notwithstanding these statistics, efforts had continued to be made to promote the service online particularly using social media with Facebook 'Likes' having increased by 25% and Twitter 'Followers' by 40%.

The Committee noted that the Service had produced good performance results against its local targets for public service delivery and had achieved a 100% customer satisfaction rating in a national survey of visitors to British Archives.

The report highlighted the various other projects, initiatives and activities which had been undertaken during the year including (i) the Great War Centennial Commemoration including Staffordshire Appeals; (ii) Wills Indexing Project; (ii) strategic support offered to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council; (iii) conservation support offered to Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council; (iv) historic documents deposited at Lichfield Record Office and; (v) continued conservation of the Sutherland Archive.

In the discussion which ensued the Chairman paid tribute to the work of the Service and the excellent results which had been achieved over the year. She commented that the success in attracting volunteers was particularly encouraging not least owing to the on-going pressure on budgets.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

26. Variation in Order of Business

RESOLVED – That the order of business be varied and that item No. 7 “Staffordshire History Centre Project – Update” be now taken.

27. Staffordshire History Centre Project Update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Customer Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) updating them on progress with regard to the Staffordshire History Centre Project (Schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

The Archive and Heritage Service submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on 11 February 2016 for the development of a Stafford 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.

Following consideration by the HLF, a grant of £333,400 was awarded for the development phase of the project to enable (i) designs for the new centre to be prepared; (ii) an Activity Plan to be developed in consultation with stakeholders; (iii) Management, Maintenance and Business Plans to be drawn-up together with a Fund Raising Strategy and Learning Policy; (iv) the calculation of detailed costings for the delivery stage and; (v) further fundraising to secure the remaining £150,000 match funding required.

It was then planned to submit a bid for a further grant of £3.9m to enable the Stage 2 - Delivery Phase of the project to be completed.

Members noted that consultants and a project and Design Team had now been completed. In addition, a Community History Development Officer and Project Support Officer had been appointed on fixed term contracts and to work with staff and consultants in the development of the Stage 2 application.

The consultants would be responsible for producing (i) the Activity Plan; (ii) the Learning Plan and; (iii) interpretation and design. They would also provide fundraising support and submit bids to secure £150,000 match funding plus an additional £50,000 match funding by Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service and Friends of William Salt Library through a Crowdfunding Campaign.

The next key milestone in the project was a mid-stage review by the HLF. This was to ensure that sufficient good quality progress had been made towards achieving the approved purposes of the Development Grant. It was anticipated that this review would take place in September/October 2017 and pending success, the Stage 2 Application currently would be submitted in March 2018 with the decision expected by June 2017.

Work was underway to plan and prepare for the relocation of the Lichfield Record Office collections to the Staffordshire Record Office and archive out-store in Stafford. In addition, the Heritage Service were preparing to move from the County Museum at Shugborough to new premises in Stafford. It was anticipated that the Office at Lichfield would be decommissioned by April 2018 and a new access point established at the redeveloped St. Mary's Heritage Centre.

A review of the staffing structure for the Archives and Heritage Service had also been completed. Currently there were 25.4 full time equivalent posts (excluding those funded externally). It was proposed to create a new operating model which (i) re-balanced staff time and resources to reduce the time spent on site and serve management; (ii) developed flexible role across the service; (iii) aligned roles towards the delivery of the strategic vision with greater focus on online services, outreach and volunteers; (iv) facilitated the operation of one public access site and supported the county-wide activity programme; (v) ensured the service met its accreditation standards and managed collection efficiently; (vi) included fundraising in key roles in order to offer sustainability after Heritage Lottery Funding for the History Centre had ceased and; (vii) delivered £260,000 savings for the service.

It was intended that the new structure would be in place by 1 April 2018 to enable the delivery of £130,000 savings for 2018/19 and a further £130,000 in 2019/20.

During the discussion which ensued the Chairman sought clarification of the arrangements for consulting with staff on the new operating model and the opportunities for reducing the staffing establishment (if required) through voluntary redundancies and retirements.

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

(b) That the progress made in the Staffordshire History Centre Project be noted.

(c) That the new operating model for the Staffordshire History Centre as set out in the report, be approved.

28. Joint Archives Service: Revenue Outturn 2016/17

The Committee considered a joint report of the Joint report of the Director of Finance & Resources and the City Director of Resources - Assistant Chief Executive setting out the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2016/17 (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The outturn indicated that the service had a net spend of £715,296 compared to an approved budget of £717,760 which gave an overall underspend of £2,462. This underspend would be transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. The General Reserve Balance stood at £ 30,697. The Archive Acquisition Budget (used for the purchase of new collections) currently held a balance of £57,542.

The Committee were reminded that they were no longer required to submit a Small Bodies' in England Annual return owing to legislative changes brought about by the Local Authority and Accountability Act 2014.

The 2017/18 Net Revenue Budget had been approved by the Committee at their meeting in March 2017, and represented a 4% increase compared to the previous year's budget. Members noted that net spend was currently £114,880 and was expected to be fully spent during 2017/18.

During the discussion which ensued, the Chairman welcomed the increase in the Net Revenue Budget having regard to the budget cuts experienced by other service areas within the two Authorities.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

29. Archives Accreditation Update

The Committee considered a joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Housing and Customer Services (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) regarding progress of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Service's application under the National Archives' scheme for Archive Service Accreditation (Schedule 4 to the signed minutes).

The final stage in the application process took place on 26 May 2017 with an inspection visit by three external assessors. This visit focused on (i) the Staffordshire History Centre Project and how the whole service including those based in Stoke would benefit; (ii) governance arrangements including the Joint Agreement, reporting lines within the two authorities, support from Members and day to day management of the service; (iii) digital preservation and the work done by the service to develop policies and procedures; (iv) support received from volunteers particularly noting the high numbers achieved by the Service; (v) the strong-rooms and public facilities available at the Staffordshire Record Office and; (vi) collections management and development.

Members noted that report from the assessors' visit was expected to be made available in July 2017.

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

(b) That the Committee be kept updated on progress with regard to the Joint Archives Service's application for Archive Service Accreditation Scheme.

30. Date of next meeting - Thursday 16 November 2017 at 10.30 am, City Central Library, Stoke-on-Trent

RESOLVED – That a further meeting of the Joint Committee be held on 16 November 2017 at 10.30 am, City Central Library, Stoke-on-Trent.

Chairman