

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 23 June 2020

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Annual Report

Recommendation(s)

1. That this report informing the Committee about the annual report on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service for the period April 2019 to March 2020 is received and approved.
2. The Risk Register for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service is reviewed and agreed.

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

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The accompanying Annual Report provides an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year, April 2019 to March 2020. Staffordshire County Council's internal audit also recommended that the Committee review the Risk Register for the service and this is attached as Appendix 3.

Background

4. The terms of the Joint Agreement for Archive Services between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council requires an annual report on the work of the Joint Archive Service to be brought to the Annual Meeting in June. The Annual Report provides full overview of the range of activities, progress and performance of the Service.

5. The year 2019-2020 was the second in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. This year's Annual Report evidences some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2018-2021. These objectives are:

- Developing an active partnership approach.
- Delivering resilience and sustainability.
- Reaching and engaging with a wide range of people and building new audiences.
- Sharing knowledge across the UK.
- Increasing our online presence and remote access.

6. The key highlights of the year were:

- Launch of the Staffordshire Tithe Maps online
- Delivery of the touring exhibition 'On Your Doorstep' taking collections across the county
- Securing a round 1 pass for the Staffordshire History Centre project
- Continuing to deliver the Asylum and Bawdy Courts Projects
- Working with a large number of volunteers to deliver projects, cataloguing, and indexing of collections.

7. Closing the onsite public service and enabling all staff to work from home from 23 March was a completely unexpected situation to manage. All staff have adapted to work from home and have been flexible and willing to support the response to the pandemic for both parent authorities. Keeping in touch with our volunteers and keeping them engaged has been a priority for the service.

8. The Archive and Heritage Service collects detailed statistics about all areas of its work shown at the end of Appendix 2 to the report. This covers personal use, distance use and online use of the service. There are five local performance indicators which the service measures against:

1. Use of the service
2. Attendances at events, talks, education and community visits
3. Volunteer hours
4. Customer satisfaction
5. Collecting activity

9. During 2019/2020 the service has seen falls in the use of the service (both personal and online). The decline in personal visits is by 12% however when adjusted to take account of the lockdown this reduces to 5%. This decline in personal visits continues a national trend across archive services.

10. The service encourages users to access material which has been digitized and online through Find My Past or Ancestry.com. Online use of some of the service websites has also seen a dip although this is partly explained by a change in the collection of data for the online catalogue which resulted in a drop of 48%. Overall use of the on-line service increased by 16% due to continuing high number of views of Staffordshire content on Find My Past.

11. Attendances at events was much lower compared to the previous year during the Staffordshire History Centre project development phase. With support from externally funded staff in the previous year the Service was able to attend more events.

12. Volunteer hours were down by 9% on the previous year. During February to March the service saw lower numbers of volunteers and visitors prior to the suspension of the service. The reduction in numbers was in the context of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic to the United Kingdom and users concerns at the risks of visiting public places. Most users of the service are over 55 meaning a significant number will be in the vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable categories if the catch COVID-19.

13. Customer satisfaction is normally measured by an onsite national customer survey. This year the service participated in a national distance user service. High levels of 96% were rated for the enquiry service and advance information but no overall customer satisfaction rating is collected.

14. Collecting activity has increased by 4.5% compared to the previous year. Service figures have been more difficult to interpret due to falls in use during February- March 2020 prior to the introduction of lockdown.

14. Overall the service has made good progress as it has managed several externally funded projects with funding from the Wolfson Trust and Archives Revealed programme. The success of the round 1 application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Staffordshire History Centre has enabled the service to make progress against its 10-year vision.

Risk Register

15. Staffordshire County Council Internal Audit team completed an audit of the Joint Archive Committee in May 2018 and recommended the committee review the risk register on an annual basis. The Risk Register sets out the main risks to the service covering:

- Physical risks to collections
- Risks to digital collections
- Risks to staff, members of the public and volunteers within the service
- Risks to operation of the public service
- Risks to forward planning for the service

16. The register at Appendix 3 sets out the impacts and mitigating actions giving a total risk rating out of 9. The register has been reviewed and simplified by transferring it into a spreadsheet on one page. It has been updated most notably around the risks associated with a pandemic. The highest category scores are 4 and relate to loss or damage of collections.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

This report has been prepared in accordance with the personnel and equal opportunities' policies of the County Council and the City Council.

Legal implications:

The work of the Archive Service is governed by the Joint Agreement and other legislation to allow both authorities to meet their legal obligations.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The Archive Service delivers a range of work which is measured in a number of ways and detailed in the appendices of the Annual Report.

Risk implications:

Risk register for the service has been completed.

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
Annual Report 2019-2020	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370
Archive Service Risk Register 2020	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370