

Local Members Interest
N/A

**Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive
Committee
– Thursday 03 March 2022**

Predicted performance outturn 2021/2022

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- a. Notes predicted performance outturn for the service.

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:

1. The Joint Archive Service works to a three-year planning cycle. In 2015 a ten year vision for the service was approved with regular reviews. The current Forward Plan was reviewed and approved on 25 February 2021. An annual service delivery plan is produced by the service to identify key workstreams and monitor progress towards targets.

Context

2. The predicted performance outturn reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Joint Archive Service. Throughout 2021/22 the service continued to be impacted by the national lockdown from January – 13th April 2021. Staffordshire Record Office reopened on 13th April with seating capacity reduced by 75% until October when two more seats were added. The volunteer programme was delivered remotely until late summer when a phased return of volunteers to site began. Events were initially recovered online followed by limited onsite events and talks with reduced capacity. Initially visitor confidence was reduced, with 68% occupancy which has now risen to 99% in early 2022. This increase is in part due to the expected Staffordshire Record Office temporary closure from 11 March. The service has also experienced staffing shortages due to retirement of key staff following the service restructure.

3. Stoke on Trent City Archives was only able to reopen following the 2020/21 national lockdowns on 12th May 2021. This was due to staffing shortages after the retirement of three staff in 2020/21. The service seating capacity was reduced by 84% and the service experienced lower occupancy rates. The service has just reintroduced onsite volunteers at lower numbers. This has significantly impacted on visitor numbers to the service.

Service demand 1: Active Partnership

4. Good progress has been made in this area with work progressing to establish the development trust. Following the pandemic recovery of the volunteer programme has been more successful than anticipated. Partnership working with universities has also resumed on several projects as COVID-19 restrictions were eased.
5. The two service friends groups have resumed their activity. Planning work for a new Staffordshire History Network is well advanced. Support for the New Vic Theatre archive has not begun due to meetings not taking place during the pandemic.
6. Performance measures of volunteer hours are expected to be down on pre-COVID numbers however they are recovering well. Satisfaction rating remains high at 99.5%.

Service demand 2: sustainability and resilience

7. The implementation of the new staffing structure for the County Council part of the service has enabled a balanced budget to be delivered with a forecast underspend across the service. Fundraising has continued with an application to the Wolfson Foundation passing the first stage.
8. Vacancies across the service has delayed the delivery of reviews of policies for the service. This has also impacted on recruitment to project posts.
9. COVID-19 recovery plans have been successfully implemented and risk assessments completed. The staff training programme for the new structure has been delivered.

Service demand 3: Diversified users, stakeholders and collections

10. Work to engage users and stakeholders has continued to be delivered online. Some in person talks have now started to be delivered however attendances remain low compared to pre-COVID-19 figures.

11. Partnership events have been re-established with universities and one placement has been delivered.
12. Work has commenced to procure consultants to deliver the History Centre activities.

Service demand 4: Share knowledge across the sector

13. The service has continued to participate in regional networks and present at conferences. Some programmes of work have been delayed due to staffing vacancies.

Service demand 5: Increased online activity

14. Work has continued on the digitisation of collections added to Staffordshire Past Track and Staffordshire Name Indexes websites. Work has begun to procure the new service website. A review of social media has been completed.
15. Work to train staff in digital preservation has been delivered through Archives West Midlands but delayed in implementation in the service due to vacancies in the team.

Performance targets

16. Key performance statistics have been provided up to December 2021/January 2022. COVID-19 restrictions have impacted upon use and engagement with the service. Volunteer numbers are lower, however recovery has been stronger than anticipated. The service has a balanced budget and forecast underspend. The online presence of the service has continued to grow.

Legal Implications

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

Resource and Value for Money Implications

The service has a forecast underspend due to staff vacancies for 2021/22.

Climate Change Implications

The work of the service balances online access and physical access to services and collections to offer options for remote use and not necessarily travel to multiple locations.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 Service delivery plan and predicted outturn 2021/2022

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