

Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee 8 August 2022

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service and Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service: Annual Report

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Committee receive and approve the annual report detailing the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service and Archive and Heritage Service for the period April 2021 to March 2022.
2. The Risk Register for the service is reviewed and agreed.

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Strategy and Resources (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 and Archive and Heritage Service for the financial year, April 2021 to March 2022 attached at Appendix 1. In line with internal audit recommendations that the Committee review the Risk Register for the service attached as Appendix 2.

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 presented to the Annual Meeting in June. The Annual Report provides a full overview of the range of activities, progress, and performance of the Service.

5. This year's Annual Report evidences some significant achievements towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Service within the current Forward Plan, 2021-2024. 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 last year saw the service making a strong recovery from the impact of COVID-19. With fewer restrictions to the public service capacity for visitors was gradually increased. Smaller events were delivered onsite, talks booked from pre-pandemic were delivered and larger events were held online. This resulted in four – five times the amount of visits and contacts with the service compared to 2020-2021.

7. The staff team switched from home-working to partially or fully working in the office to deliver the public service. As restrictions were eased far more accessions were received by the service: 80 at Staffordshire Record Office, 58 at Stoke-on-Trent City Archives, 167 at the William Salt Library, 199 objects and 209 photographs.

8. Over 1,100 new and backlog catalogue entries were created and volunteers have supported this workstream by typing up many of the remaining paper lists. The latter has enabled us to add a further 2,096 catalogue entries to Gateway. This work will be of huge benefit to researchers, who can now find more of our collections remotely, and will also contribute to Archive Service Accreditation.

9. The key achievements of 2021-2022 were:

- Recovery of services, events and onsite volunteering from April 2021
- Implementation of new structure in Staffordshire Archives and Heritage
- Filling staff vacancies at Stoke-on-Trent City Archives
- Staffordshire History Centre award of £3.9m grant
- Launch of A Case for the Ordinary Exhibition
- Move out of Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library

10. The Archive and Heritage Service collects detailed statistics about all areas of its work shown at the end of Appendix 2 to the annual 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. Use of collections

10. Across the service in-person visits increased nearly sevenfold (588%) during 2021/22 with fewer Covid-19 disruptions to services and an increase to the number of visitor spaces. Likewise there was 332% increase in the number of documents produced, local studies items and a small increase to the number of objects on display.

11. As people were able to visit in person, online use and social media engagement either remained consistent or reduced slightly. Visits to Staffordshire Past Track reduced by 28%; however use of the online catalogue and Staffordshire Name Indexes site was almost identical. Social media decreased by 27% which also reflects the diversion of staff resources from online engagement towards the delivery of in person public service and events. Overall use of the service increased by 36%.

12. Events and talks to groups resumed (many talks had been booked pre-pandemic) which resulted in an increase of 485% of people engaged with. Volunteer hours reduced slightly by 11% affected by the temporary closure of Staffordshire Record Office prior to relocation, in addition to the impact of COVID-19 on public services. Customer satisfaction increased slightly to 99% maintaining the high level achieved by the Service.

13. Overall the number of items consulted or objects on display increased by 68% reflecting the recovery of access to collections and in person visits. Whilst these figures have not returned to pre-pandemic levels they represent a significant increase given that COVID-19 restrictions remained until March 2022.

Risk Register

14. Staffordshire County Council Internal Audit team recommend that 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

15. The register at Appendix 2 sets out the impacts and mitigating actions giving a total risk rating out of 9. The register has been reviewed in light of removal of restrictions for COVID-19. As most staff are working in the office the risk for home working has been reduced. Lone working off site has been increased slightly as staff are attending Staffordshire Record Office to supervise work; staff are not permitted to produce items from strongrooms on their own. The risk for service transformation has been updated to include the proposed move for the City Archives.

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 2020-2021	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370
Archive Service Risk Register 2021	Joanna Terry/Families & Communities x278370