

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

## **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee – Wednesday 02 August 2023**

### **Staffordshire History Centre Update**

#### **Recommendation(s)**

That the Committee note:

- a. The progress update for the project
- b. Recent contracts awarded
- c. Procurement strategy for new website

#### **Report of Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of Strategy and Resources (Stoke on-Trent-City Council)**

#### **Reasons for Recommendations:**

The Joint Archives Committee was updated on progress of the project at the meeting on 28 February 2023. This report brings an update on progress of the activities programme, procurement, and the timeline for the project.

#### **Progress update on activities**

1. From April 2022 to March 2023 the project team have delivered 54 activities and engaged 1,504 participants. Four student placements have been completed. In addition, 69 volunteers are working on the project to index, catalogue, digitise, research, and preserve our collections. Up to March 2023 they have donated 4,024.5 hours which equates to £80,490 (based on the Heritage Fund rate of £20 per hour for skilled volunteers) in matched funding for the project during 2022-2023.
2. The 'Case for the Ordinary' exhibition on the patient experience in the three county asylums completed its tour at the Nicholson Institute in Leek in February. The total number of visitors for the main exhibition and pop-up version touring libraries was 72,151. The exhibition will be one of the first on display at the new History Centre. On 2 May 2023 the Rugeley Power Station exhibition opened at the Museum of Cannock

Chase. This exhibition was funded by s.106 funding through the planning process for redevelopment of the site.

3. During the February half-term the Service engaged with families and local council staff in an event at Stafford Library featuring archive animals. This event gathered useful insights about the impact of cost-of-living pressures. In March the team participated in an event at Perton Library for British Science Week. A STEM family friendly activity was piloted with 175 participants, half of which were children. During Lottery Open Week in March the 'behind the scenes' offer at the museum stores reached new visitors benefiting from the national campaign.
4. The Learning Officer has continued to work with Stafford College KS5 students using archive collections in an onsite session. 54 teachers have joined the SHC Teachers' network and 16 participated in an online event. A Teams channel has been established to signpost teachers to resources. Further co-production workshops have been delivered at schools. In total 7 activities have been delivered onsite and in school engaging 196 pupils.
5. A recipe book project has been launched to engage with Eastern European residents in Staffordshire. This is led by the Community History Development Officer with advice from a volunteer of Eastern European heritage. The project has received a positive response from 8 families including ones from Ukraine. One contributor stated, 'My wife and I are thrilled to participate in this initiative and contribute a recipe celebrating our Eastern European heritage.' The recipe book will be printed and distributed to Staffordshire Libraries with a copy retained in the Archive and Heritage Service. The project is being promoted by community groups and ESOL tutors.
6. All the digitised Enclosure Maps are now available on [Staffordshire Past Track](#) website. Two volunteers are digitising the McCann photograph collection and transparencies from the Michael Fisher collection. In addition 6 volumes of Aris's Birmingham Gazette (1744-1768) are being digitised.
7. The Project Cataloguer has worked with Collection Officers and volunteers to catalogue 469 books and created 340 name authority records. In total 1,647 out of 12,000 items are completed which is 13.7% of the target.
8. An evaluation consultant has been appointed with the contract commencing in June 2023. They will work with the team to evaluate all aspects of the project including construction, activities, and digital activities. The team have been collecting data and evidence from

activities with responses typically including: 'challenging', 'enjoyable' 'exciting', 'fun', 'great for all ages', 'inspiring'.

### **Progress update on capital work**

9. The work on the archaeology watching brief was completed in March following discussion with the County Archaeologist on findings from the excavation. No significant finds were discovered.
10. Piling tests were completed during February and March with no significant risks reported. A boundary wall is being monitored by a structural engineer and piling for the strongrooms is now in progress.
11. Previously unknown asbestos was discovered at the rear of the site and in the courtyard. This material has been removed.
12. A secure access route has been created to the strongrooms which avoids staff crossing the construction line. This has enabled the criteria for onsite public access to documents to be widened in May.
13. Demolition work has been completed which uncovered issues to surrounding brick walls and foundations. Revisions to the slab design for the courtyard and party wall have been completed.
14. The project team are liaising with architects, PRS, and interpretation designers, Imagemakers, about development of the exhibition space. Object lists are being drawn up for development of exhibitions with social media polls and informal testing at events to seek feedback on content. Work is ongoing with the fabricator and digital subcontractors to RIBA stage 4.
15. Work is underway to strip out the William Salt Library building with protection for historic features in place. The Georgian townhouse and Victorian Cottage have been separated. Several structural issues have been discovered including rotten beams under the floorboards of the cottage due to being laid directly onto the soil. This has caused the staircase to sag. In the townhouse structural cracks and floor levels are worse than anticipated. Water damage has been discovered in upper floors. A request has been made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to use part of the contingency budget to address these issues.
16. Three historic wallpapers have been uncovered. Panels will be cleaned and preserved by the Archive and Heritage Service Conservator and remain on display to enhance the story of the building. Historic Building Recording and paint scrape analysis has been completed.

17. A Clerk of Works has been appointed to monitor quality onsite on behalf of the client.

### **Procurement of new website**

18. Procurement of the new website has been delayed due to the complexity of the tender process. Advice from Staffordshire County Council's Legal Services Team recommended development of specific terms and conditions for the design, development and hosting of the website. Use of the G-Cloud framework was considered however the framework has not been updated recently and this means the suppliers recent products will not be available through this method. Therefore a full procurement process is being followed.
19. The new website will provide the online presence for Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, and the William Salt Library. Online information is currently provided on [Staffordshire County Council's website](#) with a redirect from Stoke-on-Trent City Council's website. Redirects from both councils will be provided to the new website.
20. A new site is being developed to offer integrated access to the services and the online catalogue. There are ongoing issues with the online catalogue which lacks a complex search facility and can be unstable. The new website will provide an integrated search facility and user-friendly access. It will also enable promotion of the service with use of collection images and including the Staffordshire Name Index site in the main website.
21. Staffordshire's Legal Services Team is considering implications for the Joint Archive Service and Joint Agreement. Staffordshire ICT are considering implications for hosting of the site on an external server. It has been established that online catalogue data will be uploaded manually by both parts of the Joint Archive Service and Archive and Heritage Service removing the need for direct link to either local authority's server. Discussion with the City Archives staff is ongoing about development of the new site and will include the City Council's ICT and Legal Team as appropriate. A further report will be brought to update the committee on any implications for the Joint Agreement between the two authorities.
22. The website specification is currently being reviewed along with the terms and conditions with a view to advertise the tender in the summer.
23. In the interim a microsite for the [Staffordshire History Centre](#) has been launched. This enables the Service to provide regular updates on

the project, promote events, and share images from collections and events. It also enables to service to share information on public access to collections during the temporary closure.

### **Progress reports to NLHF and programme**

24. Three progress reports and claims have been submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). Capital expenditure from 2021 up to 31 March 2023 is £469,057 and revenue expenditure is £50,668. Total spend is £519,725. £318,470 of grant payment from NLHF has been claimed with £201,255 of funding from Staffordshire County Council, William Salt Library Trust and other donors supporting the rest of expenditure.

25. Based on the revised programme from commencement of construction on 1 February 2023 the project is on schedule. Construction is estimated to complete in summer 2024 with anticipated opening date of autumn 2024.

### **Legal Implications**

The legal agreements between Staffordshire County Council and the William Salt Library were approved for completion by the Council's cabinet on 14 December 2022. The Trust agreed completion at its meeting on 23 January 2023. The solicitors for both parties completed the agreements on 1 February 2023. The Joint Agreement between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council is reviewed as appropriate for amendments to ensure it covers any changes as a result of the project. There is a rolling review and renewal on a three yearly basis with the agreement last amended in 2021.

### **Resource and Value for Money Implications**

Procurement of goods and services for the project complies with Staffordshire County Council's procurement framework. Costs have been closely monitored and reviewed with external successful funding applications ensuring the project could continue.

### **Climate Change Implications**

The project balances online access and physical access to services and collections to offer options for remote use and not necessarily travel to multiple locations. Any new buildings will be compliant with modern standards for energy efficiency and minimise impacts on climate change.

Opportunities to attract additional funding to increase energy efficiency will be pursued. The project includes elements to improve the outcomes for wildlife and the environment. These elements have received financial support from the climate change funds held by Staffordshire County Council.

## **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

### **Contact Details**

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