

Members Interest	
Members' name	Electoral Division
N/A	

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 20 June 2013

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Volunteer Policy

Recommendation(s)

1. That the revised Volunteer Policy for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service, as at Appendix 1, be approved.

Report of Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of People - Adult and Neighbourhood Services (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The review has updated the Policy to reflect changes proposed following consultation with volunteers during November - December 2012. It has also been aligned with the County Museum Service so that the Policy covers Archives and Heritage in Staffordshire as well as the whole of the Joint Archive Service.

Background

3. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service has offered volunteer opportunities over a number of years and since 2000 adopted a formal programme. The first Volunteer Policy was adopted and approved by the Joint Archive Committee on 27 June 2002. The Policy has been reviewed since then and is now due for a further review. The revised Policy is at Appendix 2 of this report. Volunteers contributed 4,717 hours to the Archive Service in 2012-2013 which is equivalent to 2.4 full time members of staff per week across the Service.

4. In preparation for the review the first Survey of Volunteers within the Archive Service and Museum Service was carried out during November – December 2012. The results of the Survey have been used to inform the review and change the emphasis of the policy.

5. The Survey asked volunteers about:
 - Their age and gender profile
 - Their motivation for volunteering
 - Where else they volunteer
 - Their experience of volunteering
 - What improvements they could suggest.

6. The results showed that most volunteers were over 55 with a fairly even gender split and over half had been volunteering for longer than 2 years. The largest proportion of volunteers is based at Staffordshire Record Office where there are larger facilities and three groups running. Some volunteers work remotely and were also included in the survey. Most volunteers live within 4 miles of the service point at which they volunteer. Over half of volunteers also carry out voluntary work for other organisations. These included: Church of England groups, Lichfield Cathedral, charity hospices and charity shops and a range of other organisations.

7. The Survey also showed that the main motivation for volunteering was to keep the brain active in retirement. Volunteers like to feel that they add value to the service but do not wish to replace paid roles. They also appreciate the new skills they have learnt including reading old handwriting, computer skills and team working skills. At least one volunteer has gained paid employment with a reference provided by the Service. They also enjoy the social aspects of being a volunteer in particular meeting new people and widening their circle of friends. The vast majority valued the collections more and most felt a stronger sense of pride in Staffordshire's heritage.

8. The volunteers welcomed the opportunity to learn more about the work of the Service so that they can see how their work fits in. Over 93% of existing volunteers would recommend volunteering for the Joint Archive Service and County Museum.

9. The feedback from the survey has been evaluated by the management team in the Archive and Heritage Service. The 2009 Policy and the County Museum Volunteer Policy were both evaluated and found to be very similar. Differences between the two have been reconciled and formulated into a single policy.

10. The main changes to the policy include:

- Alignments to ensure that the policy covers the Joint Archive Service and County Museum.
- Updating the strategic outcomes which the policy supports.
- Updating the range of activities carried out by volunteers to include preservation work and care of collections.
- Ensuring the corporate process for recruiting volunteers is included in the policy and the policy fits within corporate policies.
- A change in emphasis to stress partnership working with volunteers.
- Inclusion of a commitment to offer opportunities to find out more about the work of the Service.
- Retaining the rewards of discounts at events and an annual thank you lunch.

11. The volunteer agreement which is completed and signed by all new volunteers has also been updated to take account of the new policy. The volunteers will be informed of the policy revision as a start to the process of ensuring they understand how their work contributes to the overall work of the Archive Service and County Museum Service.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The updated Policy includes reference to the equal opportunity policies and uses the corporate volunteer recruitment process to ensure wide advertising of spaces in volunteer groups.

Legal implications:

The Policy states the rights of the volunteers and the expectations of volunteers. It is made clear that volunteers are covered by the Council's insurance policies.

Resource and Value for money implications:

A part time volunteer coordinator role is in place to supervise volunteers at Staffordshire Record Office who work in the biggest group. This role provides a vital key contact for all volunteers and offers ongoing support to the group. The Survey results testify the appreciation of this role and the value it provides in retaining volunteers.

Risk implications:

Risk assessments are carried out for all activities carried out by the volunteers. Constant supervision is in place for the newly formed Preservation Group who carry out work using sharp tools. A thorough induction is given to volunteers and they have a named contact within the Service.

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

Report author:

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List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Volunteer Policy	
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Volunteer Survey Results 2012	