

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

## **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 19 June 2014**

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### **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service: Project to Centralise Staffordshire Archives and William Salt Library in a new Gateway to the County**

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

1. That this report updating the Joint Archive Committee on progress made be received.

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

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

2. The focus of this project is to bring together onto one site Archive Service collections from Lichfield and Stafford alongside those of the William Salt Library. This will enable both services to improve the visitor experience, preserve priceless archive material and expand record storage facilities to meet the current and future storage demands and also comply with the required British Standards.
3. At the Joint Archive Committee on 21 November 2013 a report was presented on proposals to relocate the William Salt Collection and Lichfield Record Office Archives to the Staffordshire Record Office site. This report is updating the Committee on the progress of the project since then.

#### **Background**

4. The County Council and William Salt Library Trust have been working together to assess options for the improvement of the storage and access of the William Salt Library Collection. The County Council has also been considering future storage and access for the Lichfield Record Office collections in the context of increasing online access, declining personal visits and a need to provide future storage with less than five years estimated space remaining. The William Salt Library is also almost full and requires more space with improved storage and public access.
5. The Archive Service signed a contract with DC Thomson in October 2013 to digitise key archive collections (parish registers, wills and marriage bonds). Access to these collections will be free at Archive Service sites and Staffordshire Libraries and provide more choice in addition to visiting

the Service in person. It also fits in with *Archives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, the government's policy on archives produced by the National Archives. Its first recommendation is "*Built to last: Develop bigger and better services in partnership – working towards increased sustainability within the sector*".

6. Against this context a number of options were considered for providing more storage to enable collections to continue to expand, provide good onsite facilities for public access, engagement and outreach activities, volunteer projects, exhibition space and visitor facilities alongside the virtual access to collections.
7. Consultation was carried out in 2012 on an option which just looked at the William Salt Library but this was rejected on the basis of the consultation, lack of long term solution for storage, lack of support from the William Salt Trustees, and failure to take a strategic view on access to all archive collections held by the county.
8. An alternative option was developed which addressed all the issues for the Archive Service and William Salt Library. The current proposal seeks to extend the Staffordshire Record Office site to provide a new reading room and two floors of storage. This would enable both the Archive Service and the William Salt Library to deliver a modern public service with sufficient storage to accommodate collections from across the county archive service and allow 15-20 years growing space. It will allow the release of one County Council property and enables the Trustees of the William Salt Library to vacate their building. This will remove the County Council's commitment through a lease with the William Salt Library Trustees which includes an annual building maintenance cost of £75,000. The delivery of this project relies on a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and matched funding, primarily from the County Council. This was agreed by the Strategic Property Board in November 2013 and the design and feasibility study was then shared through public consultation with stakeholders in January 2014. The County Council Cabinet meeting on 19 February approved the submission of the stage 1 HLF bid.

## **Consultation**

9. The public consultation opened on 6 January and ran until 31 January. Subsequent letters and submissions were included until 3 February. The consultation was publicised through the Archive Service website, public service sites, local newspapers, social media and also by writing to local members, Friends groups, volunteers, district council and borough council, Diocese of Lichfield and the National Archives. The consultation offered the opportunity to participate by completing a questionnaire online or in hard copy. Four drop in sessions were organised, two at Stafford and two at Lichfield, to enable the project team to talk to people about the project and explain the design and feasibility study which was displayed at all three sites within the project.

10. The questionnaire asked participants to indicate which facilities they already used and if not what would encourage them to use the facilities. People were also asked what they liked about the proposal or what they could suggest to improve it. They were asked for views on the proposed exhibition space and the Lichfield Local and Family History Centre and what they would like to see in these facilities.
11. Overall 241 responses were received. This included individuals and societies or groups outlining their view of the proposals. Support for the project came from the Diocese of Lichfield, National Archives, committee of Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service (FoSSA), and several local societies (Berkswich, Haywood, N.Staffs Historians Guild, Landor, Leek). Equally there were a number of letters against the proposals including the Friends of the William Salt Library. An independent online petition was also set up to request that the Library building was retained which attracted 297 signatures by the end of February. However not all of these individuals submitted a formal response to the proposal.
12. The comments were assessed, analysed and categorised as either:
- Support
  - Against
  - Concern (some support but areas of concern)
  - Neutral (no overall view)
  - Blank (an empty online submission some of which were tests of the form)

The combined results (for Stafford and Lichfield) showed that 48% of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 27% against, 15% with concern and 7% neutral. When broken down into where people had responded this meant 64% were in favour at Stafford with 11% against and 18% at Lichfield in favour with 54% opposed to the proposal. Clearly respondents at Lichfield have concerns about the proposal and the change in service provision. However the approval rating at Stafford actually increased from 56% in favour overall in the November 2012 consultation to 64% in January 2014.

13. The comments are also summarised in Appendix 2 and can be further summarised under a number of themes:
- Having everything together under one roof is the main benefit and simplifies access.
  - There would be less travelling for users.
  - Modernising the service and providing additional facilities such as the break area, exhibition and events space was seen as important.
  - Retaining the knowledge of experienced staff was key.
  - Retaining the distinct identity of the William Salt Library was important.
  - There were a number of concerns expressed about the closure of the William Salt Library building and the Lichfield Record Office.

- Ensuring that the Lichfield Local and Family History Centre has good facilities, catalogues and online access to provide a suitable alternative for users in that area.
- Changing the focus of the service and to promote it better to attract new types of user including a younger generation and schools was cited as an important factor.
- Providing imaginative and interesting exhibitions on a range of topics and also to include local groups and societies in their production was welcomed.
- The use of volunteers was welcomed but not over-reliance on them to deliver the service.

14. The Head of Archives and Heritage and Principal Archivist also attended the Lichfield City Forum to present the consultation and take questions. Several questions were put including concern at the closure of the record office and that online access would not substitute all of the current access at Lichfield. Since the Forum it has been agreed that the tithe maps at Lichfield will also be digitised by the Archive Service with a fundraising campaign led by the Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service. This will increase the amount of Lichfield material accessible (currently 16% in our phase one digitisation accounting for 70% of original document production). The Bishop's Transcripts will be considered for a phase two commercial digitisation which will mean 35% of Lichfield collections and 90% of original documents produced would be digitised. This additional work will go some way towards enhancing the service available through the Local and Family History Centre.

15. The William Salt Library Trust has done additional work to look at ways in which the identity of the Library can be preserved in the proposed new building. This has included adding the restoration of the current Library shelving to the project so that it can be used in the new building to preserve the character of the Library. The trust are also keen to see other layouts for the public searchroom considered to provide a distinct space for the Library.

16. The response to the consultation was good with many constructive and positive suggestions to feed into the development of the project. The concerns raised have been noted by the project team and steps have already been taken to address some of them. This is a very significant change for the Archive Service and the William Salt Library but many accepted it as the way forward in the current climate of growing online access, falling personal visits and declining budgets. There will be further consultation if the project receives the Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund approval.

## Heritage Lottery Fund bid

17. The County Council Cabinet approved the decision to submit a stage one Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid at their meeting on 19 February 2014. The final stage one bid and supporting documents was submitted online and in hard copy on 10 April. The bid was a partnership bid between the Archive Service and the William Salt Library Trust. It outlined the proposals, the significance of the collections and the need for this project to happen now. It also explained the current situation for the Archive Service and Library expressing the risks to the Library Collection if it remained in the current building.

18 . A detailed description of what the project will achieve was a significant part of the bid. This included the building work but also articulated the overall vision for the project to transform the way the two services currently work by coming together in one building to offer a new service for users. It made reference to the digitisation projects, the Lichfield Local and Family History Centre, new exhibition space, and the need to engage with a wider range of users. It also referred to how storage conditions will be improved and the commitment by the Archive Service to apply for Archive Accreditation Standard. This standard is also applicable to the Library but this would be explored by the Trust during the development phase if successful.

19. There was a summary of the options analysis which had formed part of the Strategic Property Board business case. The other main section was demonstrating how this project meets the HLF outcomes for Heritage, People and Communities. This section drew on the business case and consultation to show how the extension would enable new activities to take place and provide a welcoming space for visitors to enjoy the collections.

20. The overall project budget is £4.3 million including the new build, refurbishment, professional fees, furniture and equipment, restoration of the William Salt Library shelving, move of collections, and delivery of activity and conservation plans.

<b>Estimated Project costs are:</b>	<b>£4,302,274</b>
<b>HLF grant 88%</b>	<b>£3,789,714</b>
<b>SCC matched funding 8%</b> (£412,060 approved by Cabinet includes contingency if other bids do not succeed)	<b>£342,060</b>
<b>Other JAC Reserve 1%</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
<b>Other matched funding 2%</b>	<b>£ 85,000</b>
<b>In kind contribution 1%</b>	<b>£35,500</b>

The matched funding includes the money earmarked by the County Council and Archive Service as well as in-kind contributions for volunteer time. In addition to FoSSA fundraising other sources of funding will be sought from the Wolfson Foundation (for the exhibition space) and the Staffordshire Local

Community Fund. Wolfson only accepts applications from charities so the application will be being submitted by the William Salt Library Trust.

21. The bid will be considered by the national HLF board on 22 July with a decision due later that month. In the intervening period until then it is likely that HLF may ask for more information or further clarification. Some information has already been supplied.

22. If the bid is successful at stage 1 a development phase grant will be awarded (just over £105,500 has been requested) and a Project Board and team convened to develop the project further. The development phase includes further consultation and engagement, especially with non-users of the service, to address some of the issues raised in the first consultation and look at new and innovative ways of making the collections available for residents and visitors to the county. A consultant will be appointed to assist with this work. The design of the new building will be put out to tender with the appointment of a contractor to deliver this element of the project up to the next stage required for the stage 2 submission of the bid. It is anticipated that this phase will take approximately 12 months to deliver.

23. If the bid is unsuccessful feedback will be sought from HLF on whether it is worth applying in a second round. If it is worth re-applying the bid will be amended and re-submitted. If not the whole project will be reassessed to see if elements of it can still be delivered within existing resources.

## **Conclusion**

24. The consultation results have been used to shape the current proposal and support the stage 1 HLF bid and if the project succeeds at this stage further consultation will be carried out. The project team will aim to listen to concerns and, where possible, deliver practical solutions which develop the project up to the point of the stage 2 bid. The County Council is looking at the issues concerning the William Salt Library and Lichfield Record Office as a whole, rather than separately, to ensure that its resources are used most effectively. By working together in partnership with the William Salt Library Trust it is seeking to provide a stronger, more resilient service with more storage, new facilities for physical access, harness online access, and utilise staffing all on one site.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Equalities implications:**

The current Library site does offer disabled access to its public service but it is somewhat limited. This proposal will improve access to the collections for a number of user groups.

**Legal implications:**

The proposal will mean an end to the lease between the Trust and the County Council and the negotiation of a new agreement to secure the collection for the future. A partnership agreement has been signed between the Trust and the Council for the submission of the HLF bid only.

**Resource and Value for money implications:**

The project will enable savings to be made on building maintenance of approximately £75,000 and also make more efficient use of the existing Staffordshire Record Office site. The Service will also be able to find further efficiency savings of approximately £25,000 by running just one public access site rather than three.

**Risk implications:**

The main risk to the project is that the Heritage Lottery Fund bid may not succeed but the Head of Archives and Property Services Project Manager will look at alternatives if this should occur.

**Climate Change implications:**

The Staffordshire Record Office site is a newer, more energy efficient building, than the William Salt Library and therefore should reduce energy consumption based on the two existing sites.

**Health Impact Assessment screening:**

No significant implications.

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**List of Background Papers**

Papers

Heritage Lottery Bid: 'Staffordshire Archives and William Salt Library combined in a new Gateway to the County's History'. April 2014

Appendix 2 Results of Consultation, Jan 2014