

Minutes of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee meeting held on 19 June 2014

Present: Mike Lawrence, Michael Greatorex (Observer) and Joy Garner

Apologies for absence: Ian Parry

PART ONE

1. Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

The Committee noted changes to the City Council's membership of the Joint Archive Committee following changes to its Cabinet and welcomed Joy Garner to the meeting. They noted the change of substitute member to Adrian Knapper (in place of Andy Platt) to represent the City Council in the event that Ms Garner was unavailable, but would only assume voting rights in her absence.

(a) **RESOLVED** - That Joy Garner be appointed Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2015.

Joy Garner took the Chair

(b) **RESOLVED** – That Mike Lawrence be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee up to the annual meeting of the Joint Committee in 2015.

2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

None at this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Services: Annual Report 2013/14

The Committee considered the Annual Report for 2013/14 providing an account and review of the work and performance of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service for the financial year from April 2013 to March 2014.

The Committee were aware that the terms of the Joint Agreement for Archive Services between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council required an annual report of the Joint Archive Service to be brought to the Annual Meeting in June, to give them a full overview of the range of activities, progress and performance of the Service.

The year 2013/14 was the second in the current three-year planning cycle for the Joint Archive Service. This year's Annual Report shows both positive achievements and steady progress towards meeting the overall strategic objectives of the Archive Service within the current Forward Plan, 2012-2015.

The annual report detailed the most notable successes which included: (i) the delivery of two grant funded projects to catalogue the Bradford Archive and to digitise the Staffordshire Manorial Documents Register; (ii) the Stoke Archives had made significant progress cataloguing the Spode Archive; and (iii) building on the successful start of the Great War Centennial Commemorations the Service had continued to work with many local groups and organisations to build a programme of events, which had been taken further with another project bid submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund to digitise and index the rare Military Tribunal records (started with Arts Council funding). The Committee acknowledged that these projects relied on volunteer support to make them happen and widen access to the collections.

The Archive Service had also embarked on an ambitious project to extend Staffordshire Record Office to enable the co-location of the William Salt Library and Lichfield Record Office collections on one site. This would allow the partnership to provide modern storage and search rooms with additional facilities such as a user break out space to relax and consume refreshments and an exhibition space to show off the fine collections that the Service holds. The Service had also just started its digitisation project with D C Thomson (Find My Past) which would bring online access to the county and city's parish registers.

The Committee noted the public service statistics detailed in the report, and that they had achieved a 99% customer satisfaction rating in the national Public Services Quality Group User Survey. They also noted that the use of the service continues to change and plans were being developed to adapt to new demands starting with the digitisation programme of popular sources. Overall it was a successful year for the Service and they continue to meet high standards whilst also developing plans to adapt to changing demands. The Chairman asked that the thanks of the Committee be passed to the volunteers; Friends of the Archive Services; and staff for their hard work and dedication to the service.

RESOLVED - That the annual report on the work of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent (Joint) Archive Service for the period April 2013 to March 2014 be received and approved.

5. Joint Archive Service - Revenue Outturn 2013/14

The Committee considered a joint report presenting the final outturn for the Joint Archive Service for 2013/14 (Schedule 2 to the signed minutes).

The outturn showed that the service had a net spend of £658,155 compared with an approved budget of £667,300 giving an underspend of £9,145 which was transferred to the General Reserve at the end of the financial year. The General Reserve now had a balance of £95,148. The Archive Acquisition Reserve had a balance of £62,342 towards the purchase of new collections for the benefit of archive users in the County and City. It was noted that final income levels were also up by £7,986, due to increased sales and fees charged. The Committee were reminded that the Joint Archives Committee was required to complete a Small Bodies in England Annual return for the year ended 2014 and this had been completed and would be available for the Chairman to sign, when approved.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received;

(b) That approval be given for the Chairman to sign the completed Small Bodies Return for submission.

6. Project to Centralise Staffordshire Archives and William Salt Library in a new Gateway to the County

The Committee considered a joint report updating them on the project to centralise Staffordshire Archives and William Salt Library in a new Gateway to the County. (Schedule 3 to the signed minutes).

The focus of this project was to bring together Archive Service collections onto one site, from Lichfield and Stafford, alongside those of the William Salt Library. This would 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.

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. A number of options had been 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.

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 would allow the release of one County Council property and enable the Trustees of the William Salt Library to vacate their building. It would also 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 being successful with the stage one HLF bid and matched funding, primarily from the County Council which had been confirmed.

Constructive and positive suggestions had been fed-back to the project team following public consultation undertaken in January 2014. The results / comments of consultation were summarised in Appendix 2 to Schedule 3 to the signed minutes. The Committee noted that consultation results had been used to shape the current proposal and support the stage 1 HLF bid and if the project succeeds at this stage further consultation would be carried out. The project team would 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 was 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 was 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.

RESOLVED – that the project update to centralise Staffordshire Archives and the William Salt Library in a new Gateway to the County, be received.

7. Date of next meeting - 20 November 2014 at the County Record Officer, Eastgate Street, Stafford

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archive Committee be held on Thursday 20 November 2014 at 10.30 am at the County Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford.

Chairman