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| Members Interest |
| N/A |

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 26 March 2015

Archive Accreditation and Customer Service Excellence Standards

Recommendation(s)

1. a) That the Committee approves the recommendation for the Archive Service to work towards Archive Accreditation.
b) The Committee approves the redirection of resources away from achieving Customer Service Excellence to be used to achieve Archive Accreditation instead.

Report of Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive (Staffordshire County Council) and Director of People – Assistant Chief Executive (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Archive Accreditation scheme was launched in 2013 after a development and pilot phase. It is the first such scheme for archives and complements the Museum Accreditation standard managed by Arts Council England. There is no charge for assessment under the scheme and it covers all aspects of the work of an Archive Service. It is a requirement for all Places of Deposit to achieve Accreditation by 2017.

3. The Customer Service Excellence standard covers public and private sector organisations and focuses on driving up good customer care. It has application to some but not all parts of the work of the Archive and Heritage Service. There is an annual charge for re-assessment under the standard.

Background

Archive Accreditation Standard

4. The Archive Service is a Place of Deposit and was last formally inspected by the National Archives in 2013 when it was fully approved. The inspection regime is carried out as part of the requirements for holding Public Records under the Public Records Act 1958. Non-compliance with the required care and access to collections can lead to removal of records and subsequently makes acquiring external funding much harder.

5. From 2006 to 2010 the National Archives also carried out a self-assessment process for Local Authority Archive Services. This was designed to look at all aspects of an archive service and enabled services to identify weaker areas and develop improvement plans. Staffordshire and Stoke on

Trent Archive Service did well under this assessment being rated as a four star service (the highest rating) and the joint tenth service out of 124 in England and Wales.

6. However the National Archives felt that the self-assessment and inspection regimes could be improved by bringing them together and also applying them to the whole Archive Sector. It would mean that there was a benchmark similar to the Museum Accreditation scheme which would enable a common standard to be achieved and used by funders to assess whether a service met the requirements for an archive service.

7. During 2012-2013 an Accreditation Standard was developed through a process of co-creation with the sector. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent took part in this process. This included a pilot phase and testing of the Standard with The Hive (Worcestershire Record Office) and Media Archive for Central England being two pilot services in the Midlands. Both successfully achieved Accreditation. The Standard was formally launched in 2013 with a requirement for all Place of Deposits to achieve it by 2017. It is owned and administered by a partnership including:

- Archives and Records Association (UK),
- Archives and Records Council Wales,
- National Records of Scotland,
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland,
- Scottish Council on Archives,
- The National Archives, and
- The Welsh Government through its CyMAL: Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales division.

The partnership is defined in a memorandum of understanding.

8. The Standard defines best practice and identifies good standards. It externally validates and accredits the achievement of archive services and enables them to plan for improvements. It is scalable with recognition that services vary in size and types of governance arrangements.

9. The Standard is broken down into three sections:

- Organisational Health
- Collections
- Stakeholders and their Experiences

Organisational Health covers the mission of the Service, its governance arrangements, forward planning and resources (which includes buildings and storage as well as finance).

The section on collections covers all aspects of looking after archive material from policies, information about archive collections, and care and conservation of archives. This also includes planning for emergencies and recovery after a disaster.

The area covering stakeholders and their experiences looks at access arrangements. This includes policies, planning to involve an archive's community and stakeholders, plans to improve access and engagement and procedures for how people can access archives using a variety of methods.

10. Assessment is carried out by a process of self-assessment on an application form. This is followed up by peer review and a visit by an assessor. The assessment is evidence based so it requires a period of preparation and evaluation to see how far or not a service is away from achieving the standard. A service is fully accredited, provisionally accredited (if a service is close to achieving it) or not accredited. In all cases a report is received which the Service can use to plan for improvements. There is no charge for the assessment.

11. The process is reviewable initially two years after approval to check if there are any changes. This is followed by a full review after four years. Accreditation can be removed if:

- the service changes and fails to meet the eligibility criteria
- it fails to renew under the process
- it fails to achieve the required actions under previous assessment
- under extraordinary circumstances if a service fails to abide by the professional code of conduct

Currently 26 archive services have achieved accreditation. The Standard is recognised by Heritage Lottery Fund and is an option to select on its application forms.

Customer Service Excellence

12. Customer Service Excellence originated out of the Chartermark Standard. Chartermark was first introduced in 1991 as a customer service excellence standard for public sector organisations. It was replaced in 2008 by the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard which is now open to private sector bodies. Both standards were endorsed and supported by the Cabinet Office although CSE has less direct involvement from central government.

13. Staffordshire Record Office first achieved Chartermark in 1998. By 2004 it had extended it to cover all public sites in the Archive Service. It then moved on to achieve CSE in 2010 and has since extended it to cover the County Museum Service.

14. The Standard is divided into five sections focusing on public services:

- Customer Insight
- Culture of an organisation
- Information and access
- Delivery
- Timeliness and Quality of Service

The Archive Service has used the standard to set performance indicators and standards for customer service over a number of years. It monitors

performance and reports on it to the Joint Archive Committee. It also publishes its results in the Annual Report in June.

15. Assessment is carried out by completion of a review pack every year. This is followed by an onsite visit from an assessor of one of three private assessment bodies. Following this a short report is received with the assessor's recommendation. The feedback is used to plan for improvements in the public services offered by the Archive Service. It is not normally useful in the areas of collections care, preservation, conservation, and collections information. The assessment costs on average £1,100 per year with an increase for full renewal every three years.

16. Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent is the only single archive service to hold it at the moment. Nottinghamshire and Birmingham Libraries and Archives service hold it as part of wider service. Hampshire and Cheshire Archives used to hold it but have now dropped the standard; Cheshire stated it was in order to concentrate on Archive Accreditation. Staffordshire's Pension Service is still a holder of CSE.

17. Holding CSE would enable just one box to be checked on the application for Archive Accreditation. The standard is not required when applying for funds from Heritage Lottery.

Comparison and conclusion

18. The Archive and Heritage Management Team have discussed both standards and taken part in a workshop on Accreditation. The assessment is that both standards help drive up quality of service and improvement. The culture and way of working for CSE is well embedded in the Archive Service and will not be abandoned if the Standard is no longer applied for.

19. Accreditation will cover all aspects of the work of the Archive Service and will also help the service prepare for transformation as it implements the new vision. It will help support applications for grant funding by reassurance of a minimum standard met.

20. It is a requirement for the Archive Service as a Place of Deposit to achieve the Accreditation. This will require some time to prepare and some work to ensure all of the right policies and procedures are in place or updated as appropriate. Some of this work has already been done in developing the new vision.

21. CSE has a cost implication for maintaining approval annually. It involves several officers' time in preparing for and taking part in the assessment. The financial and staff resources would be redirected towards Accreditation if the Committee approves this as the appropriate course of action.

22. Attempting to maintain CSE and achieve Accreditation whilst also transforming the Archive Service would be very difficult to achieve and not recommended.

Timescale and next steps

22. If the Committee approves working towards Accreditation instead of Customer Service Excellence then the Archive Service would carry out preparatory work in 2015. The Service would aim for submission early in 2016 depending on advice from the National Archives about suitable timing.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

Both Customer Service Excellence and Archive Accreditation emphasise equality of access.

Legal implications:

Archive Accreditation is a requirement by 2017 for Places of Deposit. Customer Service Excellence is an optional standard.

Resource and Value for money implications:

Customer Service Excellence has an average annual cost of £1,100 plus officer time. It is assessed every year with full renewal every three years. Archive Accreditation has no cost for assessment but would involve officer time to prepare. It is checked every two years with full renewal every four years.

Risk implications:

There is a risk that the Archive Service will not achieve Accreditation however given previous high performance it is more likely to achieve it but perhaps with provisional rating if storage and buildings are not adequate.

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

No significant implications.

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List of Background Papers

| Papers | Contact/Directorate/ext number |
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Archive Accreditation Standard

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation.htm>

Customer Service Excellence

<http://www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/standardRequirementCSE.html>