

Local Members Interest
N/A

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 22 October 2015

Appraisal and Disposal Policy

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Appraisal and Disposal Policy proposed in Appendix two to this report be approved for introduction by the Joint Archive Service.

Report of Acting Director for Place (Staffordshire County Council) and Chief Operating Officer – Resources Directorate (Stoke on Trent City Council)

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Archive Service has recently revised its existing internal Appraisal Policy to take account of new guidance produced in 2015 by the National Archives on Deaccessioning and Disposal. The existing policy has been substantially revised and extended to become a policy statement as well as setting out guidelines for professional staff. This policy will also support Service's work towards achieving Archives Accreditation.

Background

3. The policy provides a framework to enable archivists to use professional judgement in making decisions about the permanent preservation of records within the context of the Archive Service Collections Development Policy and Strategy (approved in 2013). Appraising collection decisions are made on how far a collection meets the Service's policy and whether it is worthy of permanent preservation. In making these decisions archivists will also bear in mind current and potential use of collections for research using their familiarity with recent research to inform this practice.

4. Assessment of collections has always taken place primarily at the initial stage of deposit or donation. Before a collection is formally accessioned it will be assessed by an archivist to remove material that does not fit the Collections Development Policy or is duplicated or held elsewhere. Material is either returned to the depositor/donor, another repository or as a last resort destroyed.

5. This assessment of collections is completed in the context of current archival and related legislation such as the Public Records Acts, Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and others. It will also take account of any current or previous government inquiries which necessitate the retention of records to aid investigations. In this context the Service would err on the side of retention to ensure all information were available to assist such inquiries.

6. There are some collections which the Archive Service holds where an initial appraisal has not taken place and the collection has not been catalogued. In this

instance the policy allows for archivists to continue using current practice of assessing the collection prior to cataloguing and following the practice of returning to the depositor/donor.

7. However there are other collections which have been held and catalogued by the Archive Service for a number of years. The initial appraisal may not now meet the current selection criteria in the Collection Policy or a more suitable repository may now be available. In this instance a retrospective appraisal or reappraisal may be suitable for these collections.

8. An example of where this might occur would be in relation to records taken in before archive services were established in the parts of Staffordshire now in the West Midlands. A reappraisal would enable a discussion with another archive repository to take place and agree a transfer to that service if the owner was in agreement. This has happened in the past for some Public Records in agreement with the National Archives.

9. This policy also proposes the development of a programme of reappraisal or retrospective appraisal of collections agreed by the Service management team. The National Archives guidance provides a decision tree to aid the process of assessing suitability for deaccessioning and the tree is added as an appendix to the Appraisal and Disposal Policy. As this could involve re-visiting previous decisions made by archivists it is recommended that this is signed off as a delegated decision by the relevant member of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archives Committee.

10. All such decisions would be clearly documented and the evidence retained in accordance with Freedom of Information legislation. As far as possible the Service will seek to transfer to another repository, return to the owner/donor, and only as a last result dispose of by destruction.

11. The approval of this policy is recommended to support the work towards achieving Archive Accreditation for the Service.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

Appraisal and reappraisal of collections will be done in accordance with the service Collections Policy which includes identifying areas that are currently under represented within the service's holdings.

Legal implications:

Any reappraisal or retrospective appraisal will be carried out in accordance with relevant information legislation and mindful of any current or ongoing inquiries which may require access to historic records.

Resource and Value for money implications:

A programme of work will be identified by the Management Team to be a rolling programme and will be delivered within existing resources. This work will also ensure that storage space is used effectively.

Risk implications:

For some collections there is no current contact for the original owner and in such circumstances archivists will seek further advice before proceeding with a final decision on an item.

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
The National Archives,	Joanna Terry/Place/ x278370

['Deaccessioning and disposal: Guidance for archive services'](#)
2015.