

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

## **Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Joint Archive Committee 22 October 2015**

### **Staffordshire History Centre consultation findings and update**

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

- 1a. That the results of the consultation are accepted and noted by the Committee.
- 1b. That the Joint Archive Committee approves the development of Option A for first stage submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in December 2015.

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

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

##### **Section 1 – Background and context**

2. Following the development of a 10 year vision for the service in conjunction with staff, partners, Friends' groups, local history groups and volunteers of Staffordshire Archives and Heritage, nine initial options for delivery were reduced to four options which were taken forward for wider public consultation over the summer of 2015. This took place over eight weeks from 19 June – 14 August.

3. The four options which were consulted on were:

- **Option A** – Create the Staffordshire History Centre Project with HLF funding. This option proposed redeveloping the Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library site to create a new centre. It would put the collections from the Library and Lichfield Record Office into new storage in the correct conditions and create a new browsing space and a programme of activities to engage people. It would use the upper floors of the William Salt Library building to for income generation and would create a new access point for Lichfield.
- **Option B** – Create the Staffordshire History Centre plus museum storage/exhibition with external funding.

This option also proposed redeveloping the Staffordshire Record Office and William Salt Library site to create a new centre as Option A above and a new access point for Lichfield. In addition the County Museum collections would be included in the redevelopment of the site.

- **Option C** - Staffordshire Archives and Heritage – retain all sites & achieve budget savings required. This option retained all current sites and replaced the air conditioning at Lichfield Record Office. However in order to achieve the savings the opening hours at each site were reduced to 15 hours per week at Stafford and 6 hours per week at Lichfield. The William Salt Library building would be retained for storage only with advance ordering required and access delivered at

Staffordshire Record Office. No activity programme would be delivered and there would be no external funding bid.

- **Option D** - Staffordshire History Centre with HLF funding on a new site. This option would develop a History Centre on an entirely new site in the county, either developing an existing building or a new-build. It would include an engagement and activity programme with an application made for HLF funding.

4. Responses to the options were gathered via a survey, which also gathered information about priorities for the future service. The survey was also discussed with 450 people at 11 drop in sessions at public venues and with a forum of representatives from organisations that have archives deposited with the service (21 attendees). Promotion of the process was wide with 10,000 leaflets and 1000 posters distributed at community venues across all 8 districts, local press coverage and extensive social media coverage as well as links from the Service's online pages.

5. The consultation survey reached a variety of users and non-users of the service and a large number of representatives of community and partner organisations from across Staffordshire. In total 539 surveys were completed, with the majority of these being from individuals. The consultation was promoted across the county and city areas with drop-in sessions held at public arenas including markets, libraries and museums.

6. The consultation was commended by the National Archives for the lengthy period and extensive process undertaken by the County Council.

## **Section 2 - Findings of the consultation**

7. The response rate to the Consultation was as follows –

- 539 questionnaires submitted
- 11 drop-in sessions delivered with around 450 people attending
- 21 people at the depositor forum in Lichfield
- The number of completed responses represented 20% of registered users of the Archive Service (currently 1,414 ) and an attendance of 33% of invited depositors (64 invited) to the forum in Lichfield. 18% of respondents were non users of the Service.

8. The response significantly exceeds a previous consultation on a different delivery option carried out in 2014. The current consultation has received more than double the number of responses reflecting a longer time period, increased promotion of the consultation and great engagement with non-users rising from 3% of responses in January 2014 to 18% of responses in 2015.

9. We asked respondents about the type of activities they would be most interested in using/visiting. The most popular choice was attending an exhibition (76%), followed by using a café (57%) or attending a talk (56%). We also asked people about how they would like to be involved with the Service. Most people wanted to support the Service by helping to plan for the future (47%), followed by transcribing and indexing records (46%) and helping to research and create exhibitions (39%).

10. When we asked people the location that they would prefer to use the Service 75% of people wanted to use the Service in Stafford followed by 37% at Lichfield, 24% at Stoke and 6% at Burton. We also asked people about online services and how they would prefer to use them. Most people wanted to use online services prior to a visit and not instead of a visit. The most popular online services were the online catalogue, online indexes and digitised collections. There was considerable interest in development of an online advice service with 61% of people saying they would use the 'Ask the Archivist' service if it was provided.

11. We then asked people to state their preference for the use of Service resources. Respondents showed strong support for one site with more services and an activity programme (over 70%). There was also support from more than three quarters of people (77%) for one site with longer opening hours.

12. The final section of the survey asked people to respond to the four options proposed giving them space to make comments and suggestions about the option. The response showed overwhelming support for Option A and a high degree of rejection for Option C. When asked to rank each option in order of preference Option A had more support than the other three options put together (53%). Option B came next with 23% followed by Option D (15%) and finally Option C (9%).

13. When the results were analysed by type of respondent almost all groups put Option A as their preferred option. This included community groups, voluntary organisations, current users of the service, interested members of the public and residents not currently using the service. Similarly when the data was analysed by district every district except Cannock Chase placed Option A as their preferred option. The highest response rate by district was Stafford (33%) followed by Lichfield (18%) with the lowest response rate being Tamworth (4%).

14. A large number of comments were made on each of the options and on the proposals as a whole. The majority of responses for Option A were overwhelmingly supportive with 196 people commenting that the option was good, realistic or viable. The next popular comment was that it was important to retain the character of and access to the William Salt Library. However people did express concerns around travelling to Stafford and parking in the town. There was also disappointment that the current Lichfield Record Office would close although the replacement access point was welcomed.

15. The majority of comments for Option B were also supportive valuing the addition of the Museum Service to the proposal. Popular comments welcomed the emphasis on community engagement and the idea of securing the future of both the Archive and Museum Service. However some people felt it would be too expensive and overly ambitious.

16. Comments for Option C were not supportive stating it would be a disaster and could not happen.

17. People were also generally not supportive of Option D seeing it as a riskier, more expensive option which would take longer to deliver and potentially offer poor value for money.

18. When asked for alternative suggestions for the project the responses were varied. The most popular comments were to digitise more, work in more partnerships, explore other sources of income and fundraising, keep Lichfield Record Office, increase outreach, value staff and also use volunteers more.

19. Extended responses to the questionnaire were received in the form of letters from four groups – the William Salt Library Trust, Lichfield Civic Society, the Pipe Green Trust, and Beacon Street Area Residents' Association from Lichfield. The National Archives also made an official response.

20. The William Salt Library Trust supported Option A as the best option for delivering the vision of the Trust and developing a new use for the townhouse in which the Library collection is currently stored. The National Archives supported either Option A or B but did not support Option C as it would not achieve the Archives Accreditation standard. They felt there was less need for Option D if either A or B could go ahead offering better value. Lichfield Civic Society and Beacon Street Residents Association both supported Option D as the most attractive option. They both expressed concerns about other options and about the consultation process. The Pipe Green Trust thought Option D was an attractive option but supported Option A albeit with reservations and expressed a desire to know more about the access point in Lichfield. The responses are summarised in the full consultation report at Appendix two.

21. The conclusions from the consultation clearly point to a preference for Option A and a centralised service. There was also support for an outreach and activity programme and more digitisation. Other suggestions were to explore charging for services and work with other partners more especially libraries and health providers. Issues were raised around retaining access to original documents,

22. The findings from the consultation have been shared with the Project Board who recommended the development of Option A and a fall back option should the Heritage Lottery Fund application be unsuccessful. Representatives from the groups who had shortlisted the nine options down to four in May 2015 were invited to a stakeholder meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September to hear the headline results from the consultation. They were also asked to discuss the plans for the activity and outreach programme to help inform its development.

### **Section 3 - Preferred option and Heritage Lottery Fund submission**

23. Since the Project Board meeting in early September Option A has been developed further to add more detail to the proposal. The William Salt Library Trust (the main project partner) is currently receiving mentoring and support from the Princes Regeneration Trust (PRT). PRT facilitated a workshop with trustees, Friends of the William Salt Library, representatives from Stafford Borough Council (for planning and building conservation), and architect from a local firm working pro bono and some Archive Service staff to look at the options for the site in the light of Option A as the preferred option. The workshop explored the issues facing the service and also the space in Stafford town centre identifying challenges and opportunities for the project.

24. The workshop identified the following key requirements in development of the brief for the architect:

- Create new storage at the rear of Staffordshire Record Office to store collections from the William Salt Library, Lichfield Record Office and provide expansion space.
- Refurbish both the William Salt Library and Staffordshire Record Office.
- Create a link between the Library and Record Office site to provide bright welcoming new spaces. These spaces would be used for activity by volunteers, audience engagement, and schools. An exhibition area, café/shop and browsing space for the service to offer an easy entry point for new users would also be created.
- The William Salt Library building would be re-purposed for a range of uses including community activity, office space, and possibly residential use. The community uses would link to the Staffordshire History Centre and also enable the Library to provide lettable rooms for income generation. The Trust is pursuing an option to provide office space for small businesses on the upper floors in a co-working type space/enterprise hub which again would generate income to support the Library.
- The current changes to Stafford town centre were identified as an opportunity to develop new audiences for heritage.

25. The Archive Service management team have also developed an outline proposal for the activity programme for the Staffordshire History Centre based on the feedback from the consultation and stakeholders at the September meeting. The outline programme covers:

- **Community offer** to include exhibitions developed with partners, volunteers, and groups. An accredited volunteer scheme and more space for volunteers both at the Staffordshire History Centre and also new Community History Centres in Lichfield and Burton. New community roadshows, projects and schools offer would be developed to promote the collections more widely.
- **Digital offer** to include the current project to digitise Staffordshire Tithe Maps which the Friends of Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Archive Service are already fundraising for. Encourage other community groups to fundraise to digitise other key collections. Establish digital displays at Lichfield and Burton to promote the collections identified by local groups. Delivery of new engaging, user friendly front end to the online catalogue to deliver access to collections more effectively. Develop an online advice service to support distance users of collections and supplement the digital offer. The work with Find My Past will continue however although complementary, it is separate to the HLF project.
- **Community History Centre** to be developed at Lichfield Library and to rejuvenate the current Local and Family History Centre in Burton Library. This would include working with local groups to develop and deliver the new centres and retain access to online collections, microfilm and microfiche, and local studies books. The Centres would act as new hubs for volunteer programmes and spaces for local and family history groups.
- **Exhibitions offer** to include onsite exhibitions at the Staffordshire History Centre to display archives, books and objects together. To offer a shop window for the collections, security to enable regional and national loans. Wider access for oral history collections and film archives will be explored through the creation of dedicated spaces. Onsite exhibitions would be created in a way that elements could tour to Community History Centres, libraries and other local venues. Loans from core collections to suitable venues across the county would also be supported.

26. A fall back option will be developed in parallel with Option A to include:

- **Prioritising securing the collections** by identifying alternative storage either through offsite storage, leased storage, or cheaper new build storage outside of the town centre. New discussions would open with the William Salt Library Trust about the future of the Library.
- **The public service would be remodelled** based on operating from one site in Stafford. A smaller access point would be created in Lichfield Library. The staffing structure would also be reorganised to deliver this model and the MTFS savings.
- **A new business case would be made** to retain the matched funding to deliver some physical changes to the Service to enable a smaller outreach and exhibition programme to be delivered. Smaller bids would be made to grant giving bodies to deliver elements of the activities programme.
- **The digital offer** would still be developed with fundraising for the tithe map digitisation continuing. The work with Find My Past will also continue. Smaller bids for digitising key collections and developing a new front end for the online catalogue would also be considered.

#### **Section 4 – Proposed process and next steps**

27. Following a competitive process the architects Roberts Limbrick have been appointed to develop the design and feasibility study for the preferred option for the stage 1 HLF application. They have previous experience of working with listed buildings, archive services, and HLF applications.

28. The architects will work with the main partners, staff of the Archive and Heritage Service and Project Team to develop the design. The draft designs will also be shared with stakeholders to gather their feedback. The design will be costed to enable the HLF application to be completed with all the required supporting information.

29. The activity programme will continue to be developed with partners, staff, and the Project Team to support the HLF application. The costs of this programme are being established to the level required for a stage 1 HLF bid.

30. Both elements of the bid are being based on an indicative cost of around £4million for the whole project. The matched funding agreed by the County Council is £412,000 with an additional £50,000 approved from the Joint Archives Committee reserve. A further request to use an additional £50,000 from the reserve is being made under the Finance report to the Committee.

31. A target of £150,000 from other grants, foundations and charitable trusts has also been set to raise between now and stage 2 of the project. The Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service are half way towards their fundraising target of £18,000 to digitise the tithe maps. They have achieved this by seeking sponsorship of maps from local history groups, parish councils, businesses, and individuals. The Friends will continue to fundraise. The William Salt Library Trust has also committed to making a cash contribution to the project. The Trust, Friends groups and volunteers will also support the project with their time and skills counting as in kind contributions. Other partners will be approached for their support with either cash or in kind contributions. Approximately 20-30% of matched funding will be raised through the project.

32. The HLF application will be submitted by 10 December 2015 led by the Archives and Heritage team with support from Strategic Property, our consultants and architects, partners, and Project Team. A Project Enquiry form has been submitted which will enable the team to receive advice from HLF. After the bid has been submitted HLF will assess the bid and it will be considered by the Board in March 2016 with a decision made soon after.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Equalities implications:**

The consultation was widely advertised and promoted across the county with drop in sessions and events to attract participation. The response rate indicates a broad range of participation from a variety of groups and individuals. The comments and feedback will be used to help shape the bid and deliver access in different ways.

### **Legal implications:**

Discussions will continue between the County Council and William Salt Library Trust regarding the lease and the potential for a new agreement between the two bodies. A partnership agreement was signed in 2014 to enable the submission of a joint bid. This agreement is still in place.

### **Resource and Value for money implications:**

The Vision and development of option A will be used to help restructure and transform the Archive and Heritage Service to ensure that it has the right roles and skills for delivery and sustainability in the future. It will enable delivery of savings identified in the MTFs of £155,000 and take into account future anticipated savings. Staff and trade union representatives will continue to be engaged in the development of this work and consultation will be entered into as appropriate

### **Risk implications:**

The project is not fully funded and depends on securing external funding, income generation and other fundraising. Options for delivering the project without major HLF funding will continue to be developed in parallel with the preferred option

### **Climate Change implications:**

The project balances online access and physical access to services and collections to offer options for remote use and not necessarily travel to multiple locations. Any new buildings will be compliant with modern standards for energy efficiency and minimise impacts on climate change.

### **Health Impact Assessment screening:**

The project offers opportunities for volunteers to get involved and add value to the service with support and accredited training programmes from staff. Volunteering provides many social benefits for individuals which can impact positively on health.

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### **List of Background Papers - Nil**