

Shropshire Archives
Outreach and Education Policy
November 2015



Gateway to
the history of
Shropshire
and Telford



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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and history

1.1.1 History of the Service

Shrewsbury Corporation established a borough library and museum in 1885, largely through the efforts of the Shropshire Archaeological Society. In 1898 a Records Committee was set up by Salop County Council, initially to report on the records of the clerk of the peace, but an honorary archivist was appointed only in 1934. In 1947, Salop County Council created a Record Office to organise their Quarter Session records and large estate, parish and other official collections, and this appeared to duplicate some of the work of the Shrewsbury Borough Library and Museum. A guide to these holdings was produced in 1952.

The Borough Library became part of the County Library Service in 1974 and its extensive collections formed the basis of a local studies library with a county-wide role. The County Record Office continued to be organised independently but became the principal repository for the vast collection of manuscript material deposited with the County Council. The re-organisation of County Council services in 1988 led to the creation of the Leisure Services Department and the County Record Office and Local Studies Library were finally administratively united as the Records and Research Unit.

1.1.2 Shropshire Archives and the Records Management Service

Further re-organisation in 1995 led to the creation of Shropshire County Council's Information and Community Services Department which funded the £1.8 million project to build the Records and Research Centre. Located in Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, the purpose-built centre has four levels with a total floor space of 1,500 square metres. At the same time a Records Management service was established at Shirehall to manage the records and information created by Shropshire County Council. Following local government reorganisation in 1997, an agreement between Shropshire County Council and Telford and Wrekin Council secured funding to maintain the Service's remit over the historic county.

In 2004 following public consultation, the service was renamed Shropshire Archives, gateway to the history of Shropshire and Telford. In 2009 Shropshire became a unitary council and inherited large quantities of archives and records from the former Borough and District Councils. This meant that additional storage space was required and an out store was established to house both records and archives in 2012.

1.2 Mission Statements

Shropshire Archives will take the lead in preserving and improving access to Shropshire's archives and local history collections in order that individuals and communities can better understand, research and appreciate their heritage.

The Records Management Service will work to ensure that Shropshire Council manages its information and records sources in an appropriate, efficient and economic manner.

1.3 Service Objectives

1.3.1 Objectives –Shropshire Archives

- To fulfil a custodial role in the preservation, acquisition and cataloguing of Shropshire's archives and local history collections

- To promote and provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to use Shropshire's archives and local history collections to better understand, and appreciate their heritage
- To develop and to promote best practice in the preservation, enhancement and use of Shropshire's archives and local history collections
- To develop and to support sustainable partnerships and to enable communities and people to engage, explore, conserve and enjoy their own heritage

1.3.2 Objectives – The Records Management Service

- To ensure that information and records sources are retained only for as long as is necessary for legal compliance and administrative need.
- To develop and promote best practice and legal compliance in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of information and records sources.
- To co-ordinate the selection and offering of records and material to Shropshire Archives, thereby contributing to the corporate memory of Shropshire Council.
- To work with the Information Governance team and the Information Governance Group to ensure Shropshire Council's compliance with legislation relating to information and record keeping.

2 Statutory Position.

Shropshire Archives is a recognised place of deposit for public records, and a diocesan record office for records from the Shropshire parishes of the dioceses of Hereford and Lichfield. It is also licensed to hold Manorial and Tithe records, and records of local government and other public and statutory bodies. The service provides a local studies library service under the Public Libraries Act 1964.

The service works to ensure that Shropshire Council complies with the following legislation:

- The Local Government Act 1972 (s.224) which states the Local Authority needs to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to, or are in the custody of the council of any of their officers'.
- The Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. These relate to those records created by central government and designated as 'public records' which may be held locally. These Acts place an obligation upon services to 'permanently preserve' the original records.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2005.

3 Policy Aims

The document sets out the Outreach and Education Policy for Shropshire Archives and shows how we will:

- Provide a range of learning opportunities across all age groups
- Improve the quality of formal learning through increased access to archives
- Offer and support a range of events at locations across the county
- Promote the study and awareness of Shropshire and its people, its culture and history
- Encourage people to engage with archives, especially those who are not aware of the service

4 Objectives

Our main objectives to meet these aims will be:

- To provide advice and guidance on the provision of archival documents for educational use

- To work co-operatively with all services within Visitor Economy and other partners in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils
- To devise and implement suitable learning and outreach opportunities, either by ourselves or through partnerships
- To provide a positive learning environment within Shropshire Archives
- To enhance access to sources where practical
- To raise the service's public profile by all appropriate means
- To promote the study and awareness of the county and its history by working with local history groups and other organisations

5 Application

Shropshire Archives will deliver these objectives through:

- Provision of a reading room and searchroom where customers can research and access the archives.
- Development of leaflets, e newsletters, and other publications
- Development of resources and publications for teachers, students and researchers
- Provision of workshops, courses, talks and events in close cooperation with the Visitor Economy Activities and Learning team.
- Responding to requests for advice by telephone, e-mail, post and in person
- Regular development of the Shropshire Archives web sites including the educational site at www.archivezone.org.uk
- Providing advice and information to local groups and societies
- Regular posts on social media, currently Facebook and Twitter
- Liaison within Visitor Economy and other teams to achieve aims and objectives to achieve aims and objectives
- Liaison with other organisations in hosting and supporting events
- Support of and partnership working with the Friends of Shropshire Archives

6 Access and Priorities

Shropshire Archives and its collections are free to use and open to everyone. Group and educational visits are arranged on Mondays or Tuesdays when the service is closed to the general public. Bookings for school groups and for taught courses are managed by the Visitor Economy Activities and Learning team.

Outreach priorities are developed as part of the Team Plan in close consultation with the Visitor Economy Activities and Learning team. With limited resources available, both at Shropshire Archives and within the wider Visitor Economy team, external funding is often sought to deliver these priorities.

5 Staff

There is no specific member of Shropshire Archives staff working exclusively on outreach and education services. All staff have a role to play in outreach activities and through welcoming and encouraging visitors.

Casual staff are employed through the Visitor Economy Activities and Learning team to deliver educational sessions and taught courses.

6 Charging

Most sessions and events will be chargeable to cover costs or to contribute towards this. This includes school sessions, talks and workshops to local groups. Some events will be free of charge where external funding is available.

7 Safeguarding

The Visitor Economy team has developed Guidelines for Safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults. All staff are familiar with the guidelines and receive regular safeguarding training.

8 Monitoring and evaluation

Statistics of outreach, education and media activity are routinely captured and monitored to ensure appropriate priorities are being pursued. These are reviewed quarterly.

Evaluation of activities is made through questionnaires and the recording of personal comments so the quality of work and satisfaction of customers can be assessed. Results incorporate relevant evaluation tools, including the Inspiring Learning for All's Generic Learning Outcomes and Generic Social Outcomes.

9 Media

Shropshire Archives has developed a set of guidelines to support its work with the media. These are available on the service's website.

All press enquiries are discussed with the Shropshire Council's Communication team and any press releases are issued through them.

Shropshire Archives' social media work is supported by Shropshire Council's terms of use for corporate accounts.

This policy was written in November 2015 and will be reviewed in November 2020 or sooner if circumstances dictate.