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## Joint Museums Committee Item 5

### **BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**Held on Monday, 4 July 2016 at 2.00 pm in  
Ancient House Museum, Whitehart St, Thetford IP24 1AA**

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor C Bowes (BDC)	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris (NCC)
Mr H E J Clarke (BDC)	Mr P Smyth (NCC)
Mr P R W Darby (BDC)	
Mr P.J. Duigan (BDC)	

#### **Also Present**

Mr D. Blackburn  
Dr K Robinson  
Mr J Ward

#### **In Attendance**

Oliver Bone	-	Curator of the Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life
Imy Clarke	-	Teaching Museum Trainee
Dr Robin Hanley	-	Head of Operations & Learning
Melissa Hawker	-	Learning Officer
Hannah Jackson	-	Operations Manager – West
Samantha Johns	-	Collections Development Manager
Wayne Kett	-	Collections Development Assistant
Helen McAleer	-	Senior Democratic Services Officer

#### **1/16 CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Duigan be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

#### **2/16 VICE-CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Kiddle-Morris be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

#### **3/16 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4/16 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor W Richmond (NCC).

#### **5/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Bowes and Clarke to their first meeting. He noted that the Committee had vacancies for two co-opted Members and suggested that Mr Robert Kybird be invited to the next meeting with a view to him being co-opted onto the Committee.

#### **6/16 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

#### **Action By**

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None.

**7/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

No declarations were made.

**8/16 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Mr Oliver Bone presented the report which covered the period from September 2015 to June 2016.

The Thetford Remembers Project, originally planned over two years, had been extended to October 2016. Events linked with the Charles Burrell and the Dads Army Museums. The Somme Anniversary had just been marked and a future event to mark the end of World War One in November 2018 was being considered.

Councillor Darby had attended a commemorative service for the Desert Rats at High Ash where there were still parts of the base which could be toured. He asked if that information was publicised.

Mr Bone agreed that more could be done.

The Chairman mentioned that Peace Day in July 1919 would be celebrated during the Dereham Carnival and Ms Hawker confirmed that it was on the Agenda for the Thetford Carnival that year as well.

Councillor Clarke was interested in the Teenage History Club as he felt it was important to capture young people's imagination early to ensure their future involvement.

Dr Hanley said that Ancient House was exemplary for their engagement with young people which was a credit to Ms Hawker. They also offered the Arts Award accreditation scheme.

Mr Bone suggested that a young person could be invited onto the Committee. After some discussion and due to the fact that young people tended to move on to further education, it was agreed that a nominated member from the History Club should be invited to attend the next meeting held at Ancient House.

**OB/MH**

Mr Bone then spoke about the Flint Rock exhibition and the museum's links with the Archaeology Museum of Obsidian in Nagawa, Japan. A group of Japanese teenagers would be visiting the following week and a programme of activities had been arranged to show them things connected with the heritage of Norfolk.

Councillor Ward informed Members that he had visited Nagawa with Ms Hawker for a short visit to the big obsidian mine and the museum and they had both been made very welcome.

Ms Hawker explained the events organised for the three day 'East Meets West' conference to be held in Thetford. Thursday 14 July would be for schoolchildren, with activities led by university groups. The sites of Grimes Graves and the Obsidian Mines in Nagawa would be twinned. On Friday

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15 July there would be speakers from Japan and from the UK and then on Saturday 16 July there would be a Families Day with costumed characters, demonstrations of flint and obsidian knapping, and recipe testing linked to the pottery project. All the activities would be free, thanks to money from various funding streams.

Mr Bone went on to speak about the origins of the museum. Ancient House had been a gift from Prince Frederick Duleep Singh and due to that connection it received visits from Sikhs from around the world. The museum had featured in a recent Sikh Heritage documentary which been shown of Sikh channel TV on 25 May 2016. A future project would be to change one of the upstairs rooms to create a Duleep Singh Gallery.

Another upcoming project was an exhibition of Thetford Pulpware which would run from December.

The Teenage History Club had been invited by the Mayor of Thetford to lead the countdown for lighting the beacon for the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. They had also helped to entertain people by showing off the flint artefacts now on display in the Flint Rocks exhibition.

Councillor Smyth asked about the teenagers in the club and Ms Hawker advised that they were a diverse group with at least 60% being made up of lower educational achievers. They worked hard and it was a great opportunity for them to succeed and gain the Arts Award Accreditation certificate.

Ancient House had been awarded 'Best Norfolk Attraction (under 50,000 visitors) at the 2015 EDP Tourism Awards. They had been nominated by a member of the public. The museum had been 'mystery shopped' by a visiting family and found to meet all the requirements. The only small thing they had been picked up on was that the volunteers did not wear badges. That omission had since been rectified with badges provided by NCC.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bone and Ms Hawker for their presentation.

**9/16 GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE MUSEUM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

Ms Hannah Jackson presented the report and circulated flyers of the programme of events for 2016. She explained the difference between major event days, which had a premium ticket price, and the smaller themed 'Days with a Difference'.

There had been a mixed bag of event success over the report period. The Spring Fair had had to be cancelled for safety reasons, due to Storm Katie.

Councillor Ward suggested that a Steam Weekend might be a good event. Ms Jackson advised that steam machines were already included in events such as Apple Day and Fathers' Day but his suggestion would be considered.

Councillor Smyth asked that an attempt be made to involve people with dementia in events aimed at older people. Norfolk County Council was adding impetus to the role of Culture, Heritage and Arts in supporting Wellbeing. The older population was increasing hugely in Norfolk and

museums needed to work with other organisations to support activities targeted at this demographic.

The Museum had been undergoing a major redevelopment of its displays in the HLF-funded Voices from the Workhouse project. A soft opening had commenced over the May Bank Holiday which had given a chance to test the new displays before the formal launch which would be held on Friday 8 July 2016. The marketing campaign would link into Voices from Norfolk, working with other museums.

Project 'Collaborate' was exploring the ways that Gressenhall could work with a wide range of creative groups and display the skills of artists, photographers, writers, etc.

Mr Blackburn noted that the Shared Museums Art Project (SHARE) had a number of networks. One was for engineering and they could get involved with the project which dismantled, repaired and put machines back into working order.

Gressenhall made good use of Social Media and had recently received another Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor. They had started to use Pinterest, particularly to promote the use of the site as a wedding venue. They had already hosted their first wedding and had two more booked.

The Friends of Gressenhall supported a range of activities including the bookshop which continued to grow its income. It sold all sorts of books and also varied its offer to match events being held at the museum.

The exact number of hours worked by volunteers was difficult to measure, although a figure of 8,836 volunteer hours had been recorded for 2015. A more accurate recording process had been introduced to provide HLF contribution in kind match funding for the Voices from the Workhouse project.

The award winning Learning Team continued to deliver a broad and varied programme and school numbers remained strong. They also provided projects targeted at children in care and working with prisoners supporting mental health and wellbeing rather than training.

Councillor Ward asked if Gressenhall would be interested in working with the Medieval Mystery Play project being run by Norwich Castle and Ms Jackson said they would be delighted to be used as a venue and to work with other providers.

Councillor Ward mentioned that the Ghost events were also very popular and Ms Jackson advised that there were already a number of Paranormal Groups interested in the Museum.

Regarding providing events for dementia sufferers, Ms Jackson explained that the Museum had worked with Breckland Council on a range of activities for dementia sufferers and their carers.

The Chairman noted that in recent improvements at Breckland Council particular attention had been paid to dementia friendly signage and décor.

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Dr Hanley explained that the Museums, Culture and Arts played a wide role in dementia. The Museum of Norwich was a registered dementia friendly site. They also worked with an access advisory group mainly for those with visual or physical needs, but they would be alert to making changes to improve access for all where possible.

Ms Jackson informed Members that NMS had been a finalist in the Norfolk Tourism Awards Golden Years Scheme 2015 and had worked in partnership with other organisations to provide a fantastic resource for dementia sufferers.

Councillor Darby mentioned the 'loan boxes' for Care Homes and said that demonstrations were well received by residents.

Dr Hanley said they worked with the Library Services to create 'Reminiscence Kits'. There was funding available for out-reach work with groups, including care homes.

Ms Clarke said that she would be willing to work with local groups to create themed boxes to take to care homes.

Attendance figures for all Norfolk Museums were tabled; they incorporated schools' visits. Nationally attendance figures were suffering but in Norfolk school visit figures were growing thanks to the Learning Teams.

Overall visitor figures at Gressenhall were down on the previous year but there were a number of reasons for that:

- Storm Katie had affected the Spring Fair which normally attracted a good number of visitors;
- The Easter Holidays had fallen at different times in those two years;
- The refit of the galleries at Gressenhall resulting in the temporary closure of some key galleries;

Councillor Smyth asked to be informed if there were any issues with school visits as he would then raise the matter with Childrens' Services.

Dr Hanley noted that a key driver for the new galleries was to broaden the audience base and to attract tourists and older visitors rather than just families. The marketing campaign would be aimed at new audiences.

The Chairman thanked Ms Jackson and Dr Hanley.

**10/16 GRESSENHALL COLLECTIONS REVIEW REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

Ms Samantha Johns introduced the report which had been produced in accordance with the Collections Development Policy following the rationalisation process which identified material to re-home.

The collection centre had been made more accessible and was now open for 17 days a year. The Policy had changed, introducing a more rigorous approach to collecting and disposal. Loans were now only for a five year period.

The list attached to the report had been presented to the Rationalisation Committee and they had reviewed it thoroughly in line with the NMS

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Collections Management Strategy 2014-18 which is informed by the Museum Association's Code of Ethics.

Councillor Darby asked what happened if no other museum expressed an interest in the items.

Mr Kett explained that they were advertised to other museums for a two month period during which time accredited museums were pro-actively contacted. That led to a high success rate and items often went straight onto display. However, if there was no success, contact was then made with other organisations which would retain the object in the public domain. If all efforts failed, the matter would be taken back to Committee when a decision would be taken whether to sell, auction or dispose of the item, or in some cases, refer the item back to be kept. Every item in that process would be given an accession number.

In response to a question from Mr Blackburn it was confirmed that there had been no change to the Policy recently.

The Chairman asked how many times the Committee would receive such a list and Dr Hanley explained that external funding had enabled increased attention being paid to the reserve collection housed at Gressenhall. A dedicated staff team had worked through the collections not previously reviewed. It was therefore anticipated that the number of objects for review would diminish over time.

Ms Johns explained that the aim was to embed good governance practice into all projects which would be good for all collections.

The Chairman suggested that it would be good for Members to see before and after pictures of the collection centre so that they could see the difference.

Councillor Clarke asked who paid when an item was transferred and he was advised that normally the recipient museum or organisation paid.

**RESOLVED** that the objects listed in Appendices 2-5 of the report, be deaccessioned.

**11/16NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

The following dates for future meetings were provisionally agreed:

2.00pm on Thursday 3 November 2016 at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum (tour before the meeting commencing at 12.30pm)

2.00pm on Monday 20 February 2017 at Ancient House Museum, Thetford

If these dates/times are not convenient, please contact [helen.mcaleer@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:helen.mcaleer@breckland.gov.uk) or [teresa.smith@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:teresa.smith@breckland.gov.uk).

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

CHAIRMAN