

## **NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 7 August 2020 at 2.00pm as a Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting**

### **Present:**

#### **Norfolk County Council**

Clr J Brociek-Coulton

Clr P Duigan

Clr D Harrison

Clr G Nobbs

Clr T Smith

Clr M Stone

Clr M Storey

Clr J Ward (elected Chairman)

#### **Norwich City council**

Clr J Huntley

Clr L McCartney-Gray

#### **Broadland District Council**

Clr D King

#### **Breckland District Council**

Clr R Kybird

#### **Great Yarmouth Borough Council**

Clr G Freeman

#### **South Norfolk District Council**

Clr J Wilby (substitute)

#### **Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk**

#### **North Norfolk District Council**

Clr V Gay

Clr E Nockolds

### **Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)**

#### **Museum Friends**

Mrs F Devonshire

#### **Arts Council**

Mr L Wiseman

#### **Norfolk Black History Month**

Mr D Keen

### **1 Election of Chairman**

#### **1.1 RESOLVED**

**That Cllr J Ward be elected Chairman of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.**

**(Mr J Ward in the Chair)**

### **2 Election of Vice-Chairman**

#### **2.1 RESOLVED**

**That Cllr R Kybird be elected Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee for the**

ensuing year.

### **3 Apologies for Absence**

- 3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr H Humphrey, Cllr R Savage and Cllr N Utton.

### **4. Minutes**

- 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 February 2020 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.

### **5 Declarations of Interest**

- 5.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### **6 Matters of Urgent Business**

- 6.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

### **7 Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2019/20**

- 7.1 The annexed report (7) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

- 7.2 The Joint Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) budget out-turn for 2019/20 and gave details of the early monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions for 2020/21.

- 7.3 The Director of Culture and Heritage reported on the following:

- At the end of 2019/20 NMS had a revenue budget overspend of approximately £145,000. This sum would have been significantly less were it not for the impact of Covid-19 on income for the month of March 2020.
- The NMS application to the Arts Council Emergency Response Fund (mentioned at paragraph 1.1.8 of the report) was unsuccessful. Because of oversubscription the Arts Council had taken the decision that Local Authority museums were not eligible.
- Most of the capital expenditure for Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse playground improvements (mentioned at paragraph 1.2.3 of the report) took place in 2019/20.
- The ongoing impact of Covid-19 made for significant uncertainty in relation to the revenue budget situation for 2020/21. NMS budgetary pressures were being managed by the County Council at CES departmental level.
- The NMS was currently examining whether it was eligible to apply for a grant from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund.
- In reply to questions, Mrs Devonshire (speaking for the Friends of Museums) said membership of Friends organisations had remained buoyant throughout the pandemic. The Friends of Norwich Museums continued to receive support from NMS as they looked ahead to their centenary year in 2021.
- The Director added that key stakeholder groups, including the Friends, were invited to book an early-access visit to Time and Tide and Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse ahead of these museums reopening of the general public on

Monday 3 August 2020. This matter was considered further when the Joint Committee received its periodic performance report at item 9 on today's agenda.

**7.4 The Joint Committee resolved:**

**To note the 2019/20 revenue out-turn and the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions forecast for 2020/21.**

**8 Norfolk Museums Service - Risk Management Report**

**8.1** The annexed report (8) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

**8.2** The Joint Committee received a report that provided Members with the latest Norfolk Museums Service Risk Register as at August 2020. The Norfolk Museums Service risk register was last reported to the Joint Museums Committee in February 2020.

**8.3** The Director of Culture and Heritage reported on two risk score amendments related to Covid-19:

- **RM14162 - Failure to generate additional income streams for the remainder of 2020/21 in accordance with the service plan (from current score of 4 to 15).**
- **RM14207 – Theft of Museum Objects (from a score of 3 to 6) (this risk had moved from being a dormant risk, to an active one).**

**8.4 The Joint Committee resolved:**

**To agree the active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report, noting score changes and latest updates associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**9 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report**

**9.1** The annexed report (9) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received. The Joint Committee also received a PowerPoint presentation by Jo Warr, Head of Development at NMS, about the development of an anti-racist action plan for NMS which would sit alongside the Museum Service's existing Equality, Diversity & Inclusion programmes and projects.

**9.2** The PowerPoint presentation by Jo Warr provided examples from a wide range of NMS projects aimed at committing NMS to tackling equalities and inclusion and to taking up the following key issues:

- The need to reflect the diversity of contemporary society through NMS collections and programmes.
- Embed equality diversity and inclusion across all NMS activity.
- Commit to removing barriers to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds can fully participate and engage with our services.
- Work with diverse partners and practitioners to ensure a range of perspectives and different narratives.

- Actively seek to recruit and involve people from protected characteristic groups and diverse backgrounds.

**9.3** The Joint Committee was informed about work aimed at achieving the following:

- A public statement committing to anti-racism.
- Creation of the NMS Anti-Racism Network.
- Working groups for Collections and Learning to embed principles.
- The creation of a Decolonisation Policy for NMS.
- Training opportunities to support decolonisation practice.
- NCC Unconscious Bias training for NMS Staff.
- A focus on achieving a diverse workforce, working through the NCC recruitment processes.

**9.4** The Joint Committee supported the work that was being done to share narratives of Black history and culture and showcase Black talent and work with academies and schools on decolonisation issues. Members asked for this work to be broadened out to include narratives about disabled people and work done with disability groups on access issues.

**9.5** The Head of Development agreed to present a further report to a future meeting that sought Joint Committee approval for the decolonising museums displays policy statement after it was considered by the proposed officer working groups.

**9.6 The Joint Committee resolved:**

- 1. To approve the NMS public statement.**
- 2. To note the commitment to decolonising museum displays.**
- 3. To note the plans to create an anti-racism network and working groups.**

## **10 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report**

**10.1** The annexed report (10) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

**10.2** The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance of Norfolk Museums Service over the current financial year 2020/21 including the Service's award-winning learning programmes and the Service's work with groups including Looked After Children, carers and foster families. The report also provided an update on all major projects, including the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project and the new National Lottery Heritage Fund supported youth development programme, Kick the Dust Norfolk.

**10.3** The following points were discussed and noted:

- Both the Chairman of the Joint Committee and the Director of Culture and Heritage said that they were very proud of the way in which NMS staff had responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by taking on key duties within the County Council's emergency work, including helping to coordinate volunteer activities, manage the distribution of food and medicine to residents who needed this support, and make telephone calls to identified vulnerable residents.
- The Director highlighted some of the digital activities and Learning Team highlights since the 10 NMS museums were closed on 19 March 2020.

- It was pointed out that social media teams across NMS had focused on creating engaging social media content that included joining with the BBC and CNN to provide content for national and international events online.
- Activities since the lockdown had included teams around NMS responding to the needs of their communities by creating exciting new video content for different audiences. The learning teams were busy creating learning resources for children and adults of all ages. Other activities included online exhibitions, documenting experiences and supporting volunteers digitally.
- It was hoped that the ten new Teaching Museum Trainees who had taken up their appointments on 1 April 2020 would be able to attend a future meeting of the Joint Committee.
- The Director reported on NMS leadership role for the wider museums sector across the East of England and gave an update on the current situation in terms of delivery of both Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) programme and SHARE Museums East (a Sector Support Organisation or SSO) .
- Dr Robin Hanley, Assistant Head of Museums, explained the work that had begun on a phased reopening of NMS Museums. He pointed out that Time and Tide and Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse had reopened initially on a limited basis to key stakeholder groups at the end of July 2020. From 1st August 2020 tickets to these museums became available on the NMS website for use from 3rd August 2020 with advanced booking required for entry.
- To control visitor numbers NMS had introduced pre-booked timed visitor access slots. Access arrangements took account of government regulations regarding face coverings and included recommended visitor routes to allow for social distancing. Initial visitor feedback was largely supportive of the measures put in place to allow visitors to use the museums safely and visit with confidence. In response to feedback about the removal of interactive displays on safety grounds, NMS staff had produced resource activity packs that were available to visitors on arrival.
- The Assistant Head of Museums said that Norwich Castle Museum would reopen later in August 2020, with the exact date still to be confirmed and access limited at first to key stakeholder groups. Before that happened a number of weddings were taking place at the Castle which were arranged under the new government guidelines. These arrangements were unaffected by this announcement.
- The Assistant Head of Museums added that NMS aimed to achieve a maximum of 30% of normal visitor capacity for museums that reopened.
- The Assistant Head of Museums also provided an update on progress with the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project which despite the impact of Covid-19 was positive over the last quarter, with a focus on the discharge of planning conditions and detailed design work with Norwich City Council's Conservation Team and Historic England.
- During the last quarter NMS had completed its clearance of areas of the Keep that were to be handed over to the main building contractor (Morgan Sindall Group PLC, a leading British Construction and Regeneration Group) on Monday of next week.
- Work was currently being done to prepare for the procurement of exhibition cases and audio visuals for the project.
- The main museum entrance areas (including the shop) were due to be completed by Summer 2021.
- The Keep was due to be handed back to NMS by Summer 2022.

- The activity plan for the project had largely moved online, however, NMS continued to work closely with the EDP and others on alternative ways for the public to engage with the project.
- Councillors welcomed the imaginative use of alternatives to online content for maintaining contact with those people from disadvantaged groups or otherwise who did not regularly use computers.
- Councillors also spoke about the importance of NMS continuing to create high quality digital on-line content such as the professionally produced films that had appeared on Twitter and Facebook that enabled a broader range of people to engage with NMS. This was expected to continue with even greater use made of education resources for both adults and children (including live feeds into school classrooms) that would remain in place after the pandemic.

#### **10.4 The Joint Committee resolved:**

- 1. To note progress on 2020/21 position in light of the impact of Covid-19.**
- 2. To note progress regarding development of the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project.**
- 3. To note progress in terms of key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2020/21.**

**The meeting concluded at 3.55 pm.**

**Chairman**

**If you need these minutes in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 or Text Relay on 18001 0344 800 8020 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.**