

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 5 February 2021 at 2.00pm as a Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr J Brociek-Coulton

Cllr R Brame (sub for Cllr M Stone)

Cllr P Duigan

Cllr D Harrison

Cllr H Humphrey

Cllr G Nobbs

Cllr T Smith

Cllr M Storey

Cllr J Ward (Chair)

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Cllr E Nockolds

Norwich City Council

Councillor Paul Kendrick (substitute
for Cllr Laura McCartney-Gray)

Breckland District Council

Cllr R Kybird

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Cllr G Freeman

South Norfolk District Council

Cllr M Wilby (sub for Cllr R Savage)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Museum Friends

Mrs Felicity Devonshire

1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1.1 The Chairman welcomed as a guest to the meeting Mr Charles Bingham-Newland, the newly appointed Chairman of the Friends of the Norwich Museums.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Virginia Gay, Cllr D King, Cllr Laura McCartney-Gray, Cllr Margaret Stone, Cllr Nigel Utton, Cllr Jacob Huntley, Cllr M Stone, Mr Liam Wiseman and Mr Danny Keen.

2. Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2020 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Matters of Urgent Business

4.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

5 Breckland Area Committee

- 5.1 Cllr R Kybird pointed out that the Breckland Area Committee had last met in the previous week and would meet again in March 2021. The minutes of both meetings would be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Museums Committee.

6 Great Yarmouth Area Committee

- 6.1 Cllr G Freeman gave an oral update on recent activities of Great Yarmouth Museums. He said that while the Great Yarmouth museums were currently closed to the public, in line with government guidance, it was possible to explore the museums digitally with new content added on a regular basis, including crafts, children's activities and behind-the-scenes films. Digital engagement during the pandemic had included a significant expansion of social media activity.

- 6.2 It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

7 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee

- 7.1 The Joint Committee noted that the Area Committee had not met since 21 September 2020, however, a report by the Assistant Head of Museums that provided an update on King's Lynn Museum activities in the period from September – December 2020 was included with today's agenda.

- 7.2 In introducing the report Cllr E Nockolds drew attention to the map at page 13 of today's agenda that showed the home addresses of visitors who had pre-booked their visit via Art Tickets between September and December 2020. During this period there was a focus on digital delivery as an alternative means of engaging with both existing and new audiences. There was particular emphasis on the Lynn Museum's partnership with the Google Arts & Cultural Institute, that included online exhibitions that allowed people to visit the museum from home, in a similar way to 'Street View'.

- 7.3 The Joint Committee praised the excellent work that continued to be done during the lockdown period, particularly in developing a stronger social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being actively used and maintained by staff.

- 7.4 It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

8 Norwich Area Committee

- 8.1 The annexed report of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 8 September 2020 was presented by Cllr J Brociek-Coulton.

- 8.2 In introducing the report, Cllr J. Brociek-Coulton paid tribute to the work of Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society) who had recently retired from the Area Committee. Brenda Ferris had in the past served for many years as a Member of the Joint Committee, as well as a Member of the Area Committee, and was well known to people from different walks in life for her contribution to the arts and to the cultural life of the city.

- 8.3 It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

9 Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2020/21

- 9.1** The annexed report (9) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.
- 9.2** The Joint Committee received a report that covered the forecast Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) budget out-turn for 2020/21 and detailed the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions.
- 9.3** The main issues for consideration by this Committee were:
- Monitoring of NMS Revenue Budget indicated that the Service was currently projecting significant pressures for 2020/21.
 - Latest monitoring position of NMS Capital Budgets.
 - Movements in NMS Reserves & Provisions.
 - Savings proposals for 2021/22 and beyond.
- 9.4** During discussion, the following key points were noted:
- At the end of December 2020 NMS had a deficit position of £681,000. This figure had improved since the last JMC meeting despite the challenges of the third national lockdown and NMS being unable to operate at anything close to a normal service, a position it had been in since the beginning of the financial year. Members were also asked to note the very dynamic position of the budget and the financial management approach needed during an unprecedented year for the service.
 - NMS had received vital financial support from DCMS, Arts Council England, and through the CES allocation of other Government income support funds. This invaluable and continuing financial support at a Governmental and Departmental level would help NMS to achieve a balanced budget position at the end of 2020/21 and support NMS in continuing to deliver a strong countywide service and critical Covid-19 recovery projects over the short and medium-term.
 - NMS was not looking at reducing core services or opening times in 2021/22, but was in the final stages of a service restructure, and was also currently planning for the reopening of some museum sites in the Spring, once Government allowed museums to reopen to the public. The service was planning for a return to something close to normal trading activity by the summer months.
 - In reply to questions it was pointed out that NMS was also looking to make more use of digital forms of communication to reach out to new audiences both in this country and abroad, and to explore the commercial opportunities of providing high quality digital products for which people were prepared to pay an additional premium alongside the continuing provision of high-quality free digital content to Norfolk schools and families. This was an area of work that would be subject to trial schemes in 2021/22 and reports on progress would be given to future meetings of the Joint Committee.
- 9.5 The Joint Committee resolved:**
- 1. To note the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast out-turn for 2020/21.**
 - 2. Note the proposed budget savings and changes for 2021/22.**

10 Norfolk Museums Service - Risk Management 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 Members with the latest Norfolk Museums Service Risk Register as at January 2021. The Norfolk Museums Service risk register was last reported to the Joint Museums Committee in October 2020,

10.3 The Joint Committee noted that there was one change to the overall risks in the register:

RM14162 - Failure to generate additional income streams for the remainder of 2020/21 in accordance with service plan.

With museums remaining temporarily closed, the prospects rating of lowering the risk from 15 to 12 by year end 2020/21 was revised from amber to red.

10.4 In reply to questions, the Director explained the multiple income support streams available to NMS. All these streams were being explored by NMS senior management team in conjunction with finance officers at CES departmental level.

10.5 The Joint Committee resolved to agree to the following:

The active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report, noting latest updates associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

11 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

11.1 The annexed report (11) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

11.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance over the current financial year, 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 National Lottery Heritage Fund supported youth development programme, Kick the Dust Norfolk. Members were asked to note that many normal activities, including site visits and school visits, were severely impacted due to Covid-19. However, Museum staff and volunteers continued to adapt very well to the major changes over the last 10 months and, overall, the Service continued to deliver strongly against many of its key objectives.

11.3 During discussion, the following key points were noted:

- Members were encouraged to explore the links in the restyled periodic performance report to museum blogs and museum activities that were designed to be of interest to a wide range of NMS audiences.
- Of particular interest to Joint Committee Members was the brand-new YouTube channel which included a new video series named 'Talking Objects' that had been launched recently at Norwich Castle.
- The wider online activities of interest to Members included the 30th Apple Day event at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse which remained a beloved event of both staff and visitors alike.

- The Joint Committee noted that whilst very few school visits were possible since March, the Museums Learning Team had been kept very busy in terms of online provision and were developing future plans for a 'hybrid model', blending physical visits with high-quality digital resources for pre- and post-visit.
- Staff had risen to the challenge of using digital technology to engage with new audiences and were producing digital content that was professionally recognised both nationally and internationally to be of a high quality. The Director said that he would report back to the Joint Committee later in the year on plans for making more commercial use of digital technology.
- The Joint Committee received an update from Dr Robin Hanley on progress regarding the Kick the Dust project which was summarised at paragraph 4.2 of the report and remained the subject of regular update reports to the Area Committees. The evaluation responses for the project had shown NMS to have exceeded national participation rates and participants felt that they were well respected by NMS staff. This was particularly pleasing given the work done by NMS to get more young people involved in developing social media output and to take on responsibility for managing project budgets.
- In reply to questions it was pointed out that there were links between the work of the Prince's Trust and the Kick the Dust project particularly in respect of developing work placements.
- Of particular interest to Members of the Joint Committee was work of the Kick the Dust Youth Team, The Time Turners, in putting together their own online exhibition on Ancient Egypt, sharing their favourite artefacts from the Egyptology collection at Lynn Museum and in developing to a very high standard a board game in a physical form based on the Ancient Egypt exhibition. At the request of the Joint Committee retail opportunities for the board game would be explored.
- The Joint Committee asked for their thanks to be sent to all those members of staff involved in the success of the Kick the Dust project.
- The Teaching Museum Programme continued to proceed well. A blog produced by one of the trainees recently featured on the website of the national body the Museums Association. Details were sent to Members of the Joint Museums Committee separately from the agenda papers.
- Members received an update on progress on the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project which had been very positive with construction work visibly under way. Work was currently concentrated on the Keep and the rotunda areas of Norwich Castle. Members could keep up to date on the progress of the project on the website which outlined the latest position.
<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle/castle-keep-transformation>

11.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To note 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 our key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2020/21.**

12 To receive a presentation by Director of Culture and Heritage about the Castle Keep Project Interpretation

- 12.1** The Joint Committee received a detailed presentation with photographs from Tim Pestell, Andrew Ferrara and Agata Gamolka of NMS about the Castle Keep Interpretation Project entitled “Recreating the Royal Palace, the King’s Chamber.”

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm.

Chair

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