

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held at County Hall, Norwich on 7 January 2016 at 2.00pm

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr A Dearnley (Substitute)
Mr H Humphrey
Mr J Joyce
Ms E Morgan
Mr M Storey
Mr J Ward (Chairman)

Norwich City Council

Ms B Arthur
Mrs V Thomas
Mr B Price

Broadland District Council

Mr D Buck

Breckland District Council

Mr P J Duigan

South Norfolk District Council

Mr B Stone

Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

Mrs E Nockolds

Co-opted Member (Non-Voting)

Arts Council

Ms K Fawcett

Museum Friends

Mr J Knight

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J Brociek-Coulton, Mr P Gilmour, Mr M Kiddle-Morris, Ms E Morgan, Miss B Palmer, Mrs K Robinson-Payne and Mrs M Wilkinson.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 October 2015 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4A Matters of Urgent Business

There were no matters of urgent business.

4B Chairman Announcement-- Rachel Duffield, Museums Learning Officer

The Chairman said that he was pleased to report that Rachel Duffield, Museums

Learning Officer, had been nominated for the Tourism Superstar Award which was a significant achievement.

5 Reports of Area Museums Committees

(a) King's Lynn and West Norfolk

The annexed report of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee meeting held on 9th November 2015 was presented by Mrs E Nockolds.

In introducing the report, Mrs E Nockolds said that the NMS was continuing to promote museums to people living in Kings Lynn and West Norfolk of all ages and abilities through school activities, coffee mornings, illustrated talks, special activities and the work of the Friends.

The Chairman said that he was particularly impressed by the activities of the Junior Friends of King's Lynn Museums in promoting museums to the younger generation. He suggested that the other Friends organisations might like to look at setting up groups of Junior Friends.

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

(b) Norwich

The annexed report of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 8 December 2015 was presented by Ms B Arthur.

In introducing the report, Ms B Arthur referred to the award of the Turner prize to Assemble, a collective based in Liverpool involved in the temporary exhibition "Build Your Own: Tools for Sharing" that was on view at the Castle Museum until 3 January 2016. She said the 3D printing of prosthetics limbs (that had found a home with local children) was a particular draw for this very popular temporary exhibition.

Ms Arthur added that she had taken up with the City Council's Planning Department the need for better museum signage within the City to direct visitors to Strangers' Hall and the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and that this matter would be raised at the next meeting of the Area Committee.

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

6 Norfolk Joint Museums Service – Integrated Finance and Risk Monitoring Report for 2015/16

The annexed report (6) by the Head of Museums was received.

Members received a report that covered progress with the NMS revenue budget for 2015/16, reserves and provisions and the capital programme, and savings applied to the revenue budget for 2016/17. The report also provided the Committee with an update on progress with the management of risk within the NMS.

In the course of discussion, the following key points were noted:

- Progress with NMS Revenue budgets and Reserves and Provisions indicated that the Service should achieve a break-even position at the year end.
- To meet the savings targets for 2016/17 and beyond the NMS was dependent on strong upward growth in terms of income generation.
- The Building Maintenance Fund had been transferred to the Corporate Property Team who were now responsible for the management of this function.
- The work to address previously identified safety and security infrastructure issues and upgrade the CCTV had been completed.

The Joint Committee **resolved** to note –

- (a) Progress with the revenue budget, capital programme and reserves and provisions forecast out-turn positions for 2015/16.
- (b) Progress with the management of risk within the NMS.
- (c) The proposed savings for 2016/17 and beyond.

7 Norfolk Joint Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

The annexed report (7) by the Head of Museums was received.

The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance against the NMS agreed service plan for 2015/16, details as to museum education and learning programmes, marketing and PR, commercial developments, Norwich Castle Keep and other capital developments, NMS fundraising, the HLF Olive Edis project and the Accreditation of NMS museum sites by Arts Council England.

During discussion, the following key points were noted:

- The Joint Committee analysed the number of visits made by members of the public to the museums operated by the Norfolk Museums Service for the period 1 April -31 October 2015. It was noted that visits across all 10 NMS sites had shown a slight decrease when compared to the equivalent period in the preceding year. The slight decrease was largely due to the impact of development work at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse that had led to a reduction of between 5,000 and 6,000 visitors (a smaller reduction than was expected), and also to the poor weather conditions on some of the museum's special event days. Going forward, the completion of the "Voices from the Workhouse project" was expected to lead to increased museum attendances.
- In reply to Members' questions, it was pointed out that school visitor figures remained high. While there had been a slight reduction at some museum sites due to changes in the National Curriculum these changes were not expected to have long term implications for the number of school visits due to the proactive approach taken by the Museums' learning teams.
- Overall, performance in terms of total visitor numbers and school visits showed that the NMS was on track to meet or exceed its attendance targets for 2015/16 as a whole and the Committee were reminded that 2015/16 was a record year for visitor numbers.
- The Joint Committee heard that the "Viking's Guide to Deadly Dragons" exhibition would open at the Castle Museum on 6 February and run until 30

May 2016. This family-friendly exhibition would allow the NMS to build on creative writing links with schools and the programme, with a focus on reading and literacy, was being delivered in partnership with Libraries.

- Mr Joyce asked for a detailed breakdown of school visits and for the names of those Norfolk schools that no longer made use of the NMS. He said that he would share this information with Children's Services with a view to Children's Services encouraging Norfolk schools to make better use of the NMS.
- Other Members spoke of the importance of the NMS engaging with hard to reach groups of children (such as Looked After Children and children with special educational needs) and asked for a report on this matter to be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- The Joint Committee heard that the NMS was on target to meet or exceed all of the goals that were included in its Arts Council England Major Partner Museum plan. The completion of the work included in this plan was essential in ensuring that the NMS met its financial targets for 2015/16 and beyond and continued to obtain a substantial level of investment from the Arts Council. Ms Fawcett, from the Arts Council, said that during its future funding rounds the Arts Council would continue to prioritise investment in local authority museums that were able to demonstrate a clear commitment to maintaining high standards, learning programmes and the collections in their care and to ensuring a high and continuing level of funding support.
- The Joint Committee's attention was also drawn to the new website for the Norfolk Museums Development Foundation and to the wide range of forthcoming exhibitions, talks, and activities that were listed in the What's On guide that was placed on the table in the Committee room.

The Joint Committee **resolved**:

1. To note the performance for the financial year to date and the delivery of the 2015/16 budget.
2. To place on record Members' congratulations to the team of staff and volunteers at the Ancient House Museum on the award of the prestigious Best Small Visitor Attraction (under 50,000 visits) Award at the EDP/Visit Norfolk Awards.
3. To receive updates at the next meeting on progress of discussions between the NMS and others to make the most of the Deep History Coast project and on the research to extend the funding for the "Skills for the Future" programme.
4. To also receive at the next meeting a report on the work of the NMS in engaging with hard to reach groups of children.

8 Norfolk Joint Museums Service-Collections Review and Rationalisation programme 2015-18

The annexed report (8) by the Head of Museums was received.

The Joint Committee agreed to the de-accessioning and appropriate disposal of a number of items which were in poor condition, unrelated to Norwich and/or outside of the NMS Acquisition and Disposal Policy that were listed in annex 2 of the report. The Joint Committee also agreed to the rationalisation of objects from the archaeological collections listed in Annex 3 to the report.

The Joint Committee **resolved:**

1. To approve the rationalisation of the Norwich social history items listed in Annex 2 to the report. It was noted that these items were considered for rationalisation by Norwich City Council's Area Museums Committee on 15 September 2015. It was also noted that these objects would be offered in the first instance to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in their acquisition. They would then be offered to the museum community at large or any other suitable public body. If no interest was expressed they would be sold at auction or destroyed.
2. To ratify the rationalisation of objects from the archaeological collections listed in Annex 3 to the report.

9. The Voices from the Workhouse Project at Gressenhall

The Joint Committee received a presentation by Rachel Duffield, Museums Learning Officer (recently nominated for the Tourism Superstar Award), Megan Dennis, lead Curator and Dr Robin Hanley, Head of Operations and Learning about the "Voices from the Workhouse" capital development project at Gressenhall which was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other key supporters. The Joint Committee heard that the project was progressing according to schedule and that the main exhibition fit-out contract had been awarded.

During the presentation it was pointed out that the project would provide for an engaging and interactive Workhouse exhibition drawing on real stories. The exhibition would:

- tell the wider story of Norfolk's Workhouses;
- tell the Beech House Story;
- provide for creative accessible digital content and an online Workhouse Community;
- demonstrate relevance to contemporary lives;
- make for creative formal & informal learning programmes;
- provide for workforce development & training and
- a new National Workhouse Network with strong academic connections.

The project costs were estimated as follows:

Total delivery cost: **£1,861,256**

Funding summary:

- HLF: £1,470,000 (79%)
- DCMS/Wolfson: £150,000
- Breckland District Council: £20,000
- Friends of Gressenhall: £18,000
- PRISM Fund: £5,000
- Other match funding incl. ACE: £123,256
- Volunteer time: £75,000

The project timetable was as follows:

Aug-Nov 2015 – interpretation testing & evaluation

January 2016 – Final building works
February-April 2016 – Exhibition fit-out
May half term 2016 – soft public opening
Spring 2016 – launch marketing campaign
Summer 2016 – main exhibition formal opening
Spring 2017 – Collections Gallery re-opening
Ongoing to March 2018 – Activity Plan delivery
March 2018 – Project Completion & Evaluation

The Joint Committee placed on record thanks to Dr Robin Hanley, Rachel Duffield and Megan Dennis for providing Members with what was considered to be an interesting and informative PowerPoint presentation and fully supported the work to complete the “Voices from the Workhouse” project.

The meeting concluded at 3.55 pm.

Chairman

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