

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS & ARCHAEOLOGY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 November 2012

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Mr M Carttiss

Mrs J Rogers

Mr B Stone

Ms J Toms

Mr J Ward (Chairman)

Mr M Wilby

Mr A J Wright

North Norfolk District Council

Mrs L Brettle

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Mrs K S Robinson-Payne

Norwich City Council

Mr D Bradford

Broadland District Council

Mr J Bracey

Breckland District Council

Mr P J Duigan

South Norfolk District Council

Dr C Kemp

Co-Opted Members (Non – Voting)

Museum Friends

Mr J Knight

Museums in Norfolk Group

Ms S Potts

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G Gee, Mrs E Knockolds, Mr M Stonard and Mrs H Thompson.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 June 2012 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Matters of Urgent Business

There were no matters of business.

5 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

6 To Receive Reports of Area Museums Committees/North Norfolk Forum

(a) Breckland

The annexed report of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 19 October 2012 was received and noted.

In introducing the report, Mr Diugan congratulated the Gressenhall Learning Team on receiving the Sandford Award for Heritage Education which would help with marketing museum activities to schools.

(b) Kings Lynn and West Norfolk

In the absence of Mrs Knockolds, whom had given her apologies for the meeting, the annexed report of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee meeting held on 15 October 2012 was introduced by Mr Wright.

The Joint Committee noted that the main exhibition gallery at the Lynn Museum was being refreshed over the winter period thanks to funding from the Arts Council Major Partnership Programme.

(c) North Norfolk

The annexed reports of the North Norfolk Museums Forum meetings held on 11 July 2012 and 25 October 2012 were received and noted.

In introducing the reports, Mrs Brettle referred to the large numbers of heritage organisations in the North Norfolk area that were represented on the Forum and how the Forum brought museums together to encourage partnership working.

(d) Norwich

The annexed reports of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meetings held on 17 July 2012 and 23 October 2012 were received and noted.

In introducing the reports, Mr Bradford placed on record members' thanks to the Friends of the Norwich Museums who had contributed £25,000 to the refurbishment of the Bridewell Museum.

Mr Barry Stone, Cabinet Member for Cultural Services at Norfolk County Council, said that he would be willing to attend Area Museums Committee/Museums Forum meetings to discuss the County Council's approach to the findings of the Museums Working Group, after the findings had been considered by the County Council's Cabinet on 3 December 2012. Mr Stone was asked to make separate arrangements for informing Broadland District Council (and South Norfolk District Council) which did not have an Area Museums Committee.

7 Proposed Change to Area Committee Arrangements in Great Yarmouth

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

Resolved

That the Joint Committee approve the decision of the Great Yarmouth Borough Council to reinstate the Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee.

8 Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service – Integrated Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report for 2012/13.

The annexed report by the Head of Museums for Archaeology was received.

The Joint Committee received a report that provided performance against NMAS Service Plans and budget out-turns based on information at 30 September 2012.

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

- The NMAS remained on target to achieve a break-even budget position.
- The NMAS was close to a 5% reduction in admissions income, which was identified as an “amber” level risk within the NMAS risk register. Any adverse changes in visitor attendance and spending patterns could impact on the budget but the NMAS maintained an Income Reserve for that purpose.
- Officers were asked to take up corporately whether a more visible means could be found to show different levels of risk in risk registers.
- In reply to questions, the Head of Museums and Archaeology said that Mr Mark Clancy, who had gained wide ranging commercial experience whilst working at Walsall Museum and Art Gallery and for the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, would be taking up his new post of commercial manager for the NMAS on 3 December 2012. The post would be funded by the Arts Council for a period of two years and be responsible for reviewing current commercial performance and for examining options for further improving the return on retail and catering.
- The Gressenhall Eco – buildings project had been re-scoped in order to meet planning objections, and was going through the planning process again.
- The NMAS had investigated with the Highways Agency how to improve the safety of museum visitors crossing the public highway that divided Gressenhall Farm from the remainder of the Museum site.

The Joint Committee noted the following:

- Progress with performance and 2012/13 service plans
- Progress with the revenue budget, capital programme and reserves and provisions out-turn positions for 2012/13
- The Annual Governance Letter and Annual Audit Report
- The review of the NMAS Risk Register.

9 Service and Budget Planning 2013/15 for Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

The Joint Committee received a report that set out the financial and planning context for the County Council and gave specific service information for the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service for the next financial year.

In the course of the discussion, the Joint Committee noted the following:

- The revised service and financial planning context and assumptions.
- A detailed list of the updated costs and pressures facing NMAS
- A detailed list of updated proposals for savings
- Information about new capital bids and funding
- Known priorities for the service within the next service planning round 2013/15
- The figure for “new savings proposals” mentioned Appendix A to the report should read “126” rather than “94”
- Changes in demand for NMAS services could be attributed to competition from the wider cultural sector and from the cultural digital “economy” and changes in economic climate which impacted on consumer spending.

10 Collections for Rationalisation

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

The Joint Committee received a report that set out the background to a review of a group of social history items at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and at Great Yarmouth Museums that were in poor condition and fell outside the NMAS Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

The Joint Committee noted the following:

- The term “de-accessioning” was a technical term used in the museums world to describe a process that preceded the act of “disposal” of museum items.
- Only items that had been de-accessioned could be considered for disposal.
- Item 3 (an electric cooker) (mentioned at page 100 of the agenda papers) had been removed from the list of items to be de-accessioned pending further research.
- Item 16 (the Brancaster water pump) did not form part of the current display within the NMAS and would be offered to Anglia Water.
- Requests from reputable and relevant organisations (such as railway preservation societies) that were able to provide a good home for items earmarked for disposal would be considered before items were put forward for sale on the open market.
- Should de-accessioned items be placed for sale on the open market, then Members asked to be sent the details at the time of sale.

Resolved

That the objects listed in Annexes 2 and 3 of the report be de-accessioned (subject to the removal from the list of de-accessioned items, item 3, an electric cooker).

11 NMAS Collections Development Project

The annexed report by the Head of Museums and Archaeology was received.

The Joint Museums Committee received a report that explained how the NMAS was creating a sustainable future for NMAS Collections, one where each and every accessioned object was significant to the aims of the Service, was accessible by staff and the public, and was stored in conditions which would assist its long-term preservation and use.

It was pointed out that the focus of the development project would be the collections housed at the Gressenhall superstores which were the largest collection stores within the NMAS and almost full to capacity. Space needed to be created to house the collections from the North Walsham store which had been closed as part of the NMAS Efficiencies Programme.

The Joint Committee noted that running in parallel with the 3-year project funded by Arts Council England's Major Partner funding stream from April 2012 until March 2015 was a complementary programme funded by the Esmée Fairborn Foundation called "Shine A Light" which would run from January 2013 until March 2014. The complementary programme had as one of its aims the creation of a sustainable and skilled volunteer and staff team to help unlock the potential of the reserve collections at Gressenhall.

It was also pointed out that the NMAS was exploring possibilities for using digital technology to improve intellectual and physical access to stored collections.

Resolved

That the Joint Committee agreed:

- a) The vision for the Gressenhall superstores, set out in Annex 1 to the report.
- b) The NMAS Archaeological Review and Rationalisation Strategy, set out in Annex 2.
- c) The disposal of bulk archaeological material identified through the process, set out in Annex 2, section H.
- d) The Head of Museums and Archaeology report to the Joint Committee on such disposals in January each year.

12 Stories from the Sea – an innovative museum project in Great Yarmouth

The Joint Committee received a report and a power point presentation about how the Great Yarmouth museums were working on a three year programme aimed at improving educational attainment and ensuring school children in the Great Yarmouth area developed an understanding of their local heritage and its significance.

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

- Members were of the view that the words “areas of low cultural engagement” should be avoided because “cultural engagement” meant different things to different people. The Head of Museums and Archaeology was asked to point this out to the Arts Council.
- Time and Tide Museum and Royal Museums Greenwich had been selected to run one of ten national pilots.
- The NMAS had been awarded £180,000 of DFE/ACE funding over three years up to March 2015.
- The Great Yarmouth Museums would be working with the Royal Museums Greenwich to develop a programme of innovative and high quality activities and learning resources amongst targeted schools in the Great Yarmouth area. The project aimed to work with 4,500 pupils up to March 2015. In reply to questions, it was pointed out that there were possibilities for further work to sustain these contacts after March 2015.
- This money would help to increase visits by school children to Great Yarmouth Museums; to create a programme that would help children develop a better understanding of their local heritage, and support improvements in educational attainment.
- Writers in residence in the area would work with students and support informal learning events.
- The project outcomes should mean more children and families committed to visiting museums for learning and strengthened relationships with schools.

Resolved

To note the report.

13 Skills for the Future

The Joint Committee received a power point presentation from Sally Ackroyd, NMAS Skills for the Future Officer. Also present for the consideration of this item were Helen Bainbridge, Library and Archive Trainee, Hannah Southon, Environmental Conservation Trainee and Tom Watson, Environmental Conservation Trainee.

It was noted that Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse was offering a number of formal traditional skills based apprenticeships in such areas as farming and horticulture in partnership with Easton College. There were also 6-12 month internships suitable for both young people and those looking for a second career.

The internships were both part-time and full-time and covered:

- Heritage Gardening
- Museums Collections Management
- Historic Engine Running and Maintenance
- Learning Activities Using Traditional Skills
- Historic Building Maintenance

The apprenticeships were for eighteen months full-time and covered:

- Mixed Farming

- Horticulture
- Environmental Conservation
- Farriery

Over the period of the project there had been 80 trainees, 36 of these had been based at Gressenhall with 10 or 11 trainees based at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse at any one time. While most of the trainees came from the Eastern region, there had been national and international interest in these highly traditional skilled based apprenticeships.

Resolved

To note the presentation.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm.

CHAIRMAN



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