

## Norfolk Joint Museums Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 April 2024 at 14:00 at County Hall, Norwich

### Present:

Cllr John Ward (Chair)	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Tony Adams	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Lesley Bambridge	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton	Norfolk County Council
Cllr John Fisher	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Geoffrey Freeman	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Cllr Jacob Huntley	Norwich City Council
Cllr Claire Kidman	Norwich City Council
Cllr Robert Kybird (Vice-Chair)	Breckland District Council
Cllr Ed Maxfield	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Saul Penfold	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Robert Savage	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Liz Withington	North Norfolk District Council

### Substitute Members Present:

Cllr Will Richmond for Cllr Karen Vincent (Norfolk County Council)

### Also present:

Felicity Devonshire	Friends of the Norwich Museums (Co-opted Member)
Hannah Jackson	Project Manager, Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn
Steve Miller	Director of Culture & Heritage, Head of Norfolk Museums Service
Cllr Chrissie Rumsby	Local Member for Mile Cross, Observer (non-voting)
Laine Tisdall	Committee Officer, Democratic Services
Jo Warr	Head of Development, Norfolk Museums Service

### 1. Apologies and substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Karen Vincent (substituted by Cllr Will Richmond), Cllr Martin Booth, Cllr Jeremy Rowe, and John Simpson Wedge.

### 2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2024 were agreed as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Lesley Bambridge declared a non-pecuniary interest, as she was currently a trustee of True's Yard in King's Lynn.

### 4. Breckland Area Museums Committee

- 4.1 The Vice-Chair provided a verbal update to the Committee from the meeting held on the 15 April 2024

- 4.2 The Area Museums Committee formerly announced the £198,059 award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) towards the Duleep Singh gallery at Ancient House. Support funding had increased to approximately £30,000, with further sources of funding available from the Council.
- 4.3 Preparations for the centenary celebrations at Ancient House were ongoing, with a hundred objects exhibition being created with input from community groups.
- 4.4 Several special events were held at Gressenhall Museum over Christmas, Mothering Sunday and Easter.
- 4.5 Ancient House saw 10,049 visitors during 2023, which was up by 12% on the previous year's figures. Gressenhall Museum welcomed 49,910 visitors over the same period, which was a marginal drop over 2022's total.
- 4.6 The Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the update.

## 5. Great Yarmouth Area Museums Working Group

- 5.1 Cllr Geoffrey Freeman introduced the minutes of the meeting held on the 20 March 2024.
- 5.2 The recently launched *Dinosaurium* exhibition at Time and Tide Museum had proved immediately popular with visitors.
- 5.3 The Red Herring Gallery at Time and Tide was host to a number of works from young people involved with Kick the Dust, touching on the herring trade in Great Yarmouth.
- 5.4 *The Wreck of the Gloucester*, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century painting by Johan Danckerts, was currently on loan to Time and Tide. The museum had also received a collection of documents from the Barnwell brothers, who were the divers who discovered the shipwreck of HMS Gloucester in 2007.
- 5.5 The NLHF announced a £12m award for the complete refurbishment of Winter Gardens. Cllr Freeman commented that this posed a future opportunity for the Museums Service to gain a foothold on the promenade at Great Yarmouth.
- 5.6 The following points were raised and discussed.
- The Chair commented that surveys were still ongoing on the seabed around the HMS Gloucester shipwreck. Further details were expected to be revealed later in 2024.
  - A Committee Member asked if there was an update on the NLHF application towards the Changing Tides – Shaping Our Great Yarmouth project at Time and Tide. Officers confirmed that the application went before the NLHF committee in March 2024 and had been unsuccessful. Feedback was provided to the team, which would enable officers to rescope the project and resubmit the application later in 2024.
- 5.7 The Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the minutes.

## 6. Norwich Area Museums Committee

- 6.1 Cllr Jacob Huntley introduced the minutes of the meeting held on the 5 March 2024 to the Committee.

- 6.2 Strangers Hall was currently hosting an event on Robert Kett and Kett's Rebellion. Key Stage 2 students were being introduced to this. In addition, Key Stage 3 students were introduced to an exhibition on the transatlantic slave trade.
- 6.3 The Area Museums Committee received a briefing on a future Norwich Castle exhibition; JMW Turner and Changing Visions of Landscape. In addition, an update was provided on the renovations taking place at The Shirehall.
- 6.4 The Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the minutes.

## **7. King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee**

- 7.1 Cllr Lesley Bambridge introduced the minutes of the meeting held on the 8 January 2024 to the Committee.
- 7.2 The Tiger Who Came To Tea exhibition at Lynn Museum in late 2023/early 2024 proved to be a resounding success.
- 7.3 The Area Committee discussed how best to communicate special events being held at museums in the district. Sending information to parish councils was being looked at as a potential opportunity. In addition, two local newspapers operated in the King's Lynn area, one of which also had online outreach.
- 7.4 The following point was raised and discussed.
- The Vice-Chair commented that the Moon Exhibition at Lynn Museum was very positive. While focussed on the Moon, the exhibition also touched upon the history of space exploration.
- 7.5 The Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the minutes.

## **8. Norfolk Museums Service – Finance Monitoring Report for 2023/24**

- 8.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9).
- 8.2 Officers introduced the report to the Committee, which covered the Norfolk Museums Service forecast budget out-turn for 2023/24, while detailing the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves, and provisions.
- 8.3 There was a budget overspend of £906,000, which had worsened moderately since the last update to the Committee. Officers gave reassurance that this was not unexpected due to pressures caused by the cost of utilities since the last modelling completed just before Christmas 2023. The pressures were consistent with those being experienced by other Council services. Following conversations with the Corporate Property team, the Museums Services utilities budget was to move under the corporate umbrella which would make this more manageable going forward. Support continued to be received from NCC to help with these extraordinary pressures.
- 8.4 Other budgetary pressures were due to large-scale exhibitions and some one-off marketing pressures, particularly with regard to the Gloucester exhibition in Norwich. The reduction in admission charges at Norwich Castle while the Keep Project was progressing had also contributed significantly to the pressures being managed during 2023/24 and many of these pressures were expected to reduce during the coming financial year.

8.5 The following points were raised and discussed:

- A Committee Member queried if there were any additional costs associated with the Gloucester exhibition and whether income and expenditure of individual exhibitions could be tracked. An officer stated that exhibitions trends were tracked by the team, with those that involved loaned exhibits tending to be more expensive. However, bigger exhibitions had the possibility of attracting sponsorship as well as greater numbers of visitors, and therefore, greater income.
- A Committee Member stated he had recently attended the *Norwich Works* exhibition and found it captivating. The Committee Member queried as to how the Service approached marketing such an exhibition and setting visitor targets, given that it would likely attract a certain demographic. Officers gave an overview of how the exhibition was marketed, which involved copious use of social media platforms and working alongside partners such as the University of East Anglia (UEA). Word-of-mouth was considered one of the reasons why *Norwich Works* succeeded. The Committee Member asked if schools were included in the marketing programme. Officers clarified that while there was no targeted marketing, there was evidence school parties were attending exhibitions.
- A Committee Member asked if there was any advice regarding business rates that the Museums Service could give to independent museums in Norfolk. An officer stated that business rate relief was granted on a discretionary basis depending on the case. The Museum Development team would look into this area further and communicate any advice to independent museums.

8.6 The Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **CONSIDER** and **COMMENT** on the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast outturn for 2023/24.

## 9. Norfolk Museums Service – Risk Management

9.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9).

9.2 Officers introduced the report to the Committee, which gave an insight into the key risks that were managed by the Norfolk Museums Service.

9.3 There had been only one significant change to note, which related to RM14364 - Failure to deliver Arts Council England business plan 2023-27. The Arts Council announced a one year extension to the duration of the programme. The level of risk remained unchanged; however, the timescale was suitably altered.

9.4 The following point was raised and discussed:

- The Vice-Chair queried if the failure to maintain historic buildings risk related just to buildings owned by Norfolk County Council or to all buildings in the Norfolk Museums Service portfolio, given a dry rot issue affecting buildings in Norwich. Officers confirmed the risk covered everything within the net museum portfolio. The dry rot issue was being monitored and maintained by the Corporate Property team.

9.5 Having considered the contents of the report, the Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** the following:

1. To **AGREE** the proposed changes to risks as set out in item 2.1 in the report.
2. To **NOTE** the active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report.

## **10. Norfolk Museums Service – Performance and Strategic Update Report**

10.1 The Committee received the annexed report (9).

10.2 Officers introduced the report to the Committee, which provided an update on the performance of the Norfolk Museums Service over the 2023/24 financial year plus an update on major projects.

10.3 Norwich Castle had recorded good visitor figures over the summer of 2023, which were then bolstered by the Gloucester exhibition. Visitor figures were now returning to pre-pandemic levels.

10.4 Five trainees recently began working for the Service, of which two were based at Lynn Museum. The trainees were currently working across the entire bandwidth of the Service.

10.5 Dr Robin Hanley was part of a mid-stage review with the Service's partners at YMCA Leicestershire the previous week towards the NLHF application for an iteration of Kick the Dust. The general feeling was positive, with a further update on proceedings to be brought to the July 2024 meeting of the Joint Museums Committee.

10.6 A new Service Level Agreement with Broadland and South Norfolk Councils was being drafted, while the Service Level Agreement with the UEA was proceeding towards renewal in June 2024.

10.7 Arts Council England required an activity plan to be drawn up every year. Officers stated that the Service had delivered against all ten activity areas in 2023/24. The plan was to be updated for 2024/25. Ten priority activities would continue into the new financial year, including the redevelopment of Time and Tide Museum and continuing to deliver youth engagement programmes.

10.8 Hannah Jackson gave a presentation to the Committee illustrating the latest updates to the Royal Palace Reborn Project. The presentation slides could be found on the County Council's website under Committees.

10.9 The following points were raised and discussed:

- The Chair asked if there was further information regarding the trainees at Lynn Museums. An officer clarified that one trainee was currently working on curatorial matters, while the other was focused on collections management.
- The Vice-Chair stated it may be useful for the Committee to receive an annual report from North Norfolk District Council regarding their museums. An officer confirmed there had been discussion with the district council regarding this.


- A Committee Member queried if the Levelling Up activity plan contained in the Arts Council England ten-year strategy had been scoped out for districts or whether this was planned for the future. Officers stated that the majority of the levelling up work conducted by the service was focussed on youth engagement programmes, which would reach the North Norfolk district. It was the aim to eventually roll this out to all districts in Norfolk.
- A Committee Member asked if there was a projected opening date for the Keep at Norwich Castle. Officers stated there was optimism for the Keep to be open later in 2024, given the very good progress being made on the project.
- A Committee Member asked if Norwich Castle would be fully accessible to visitors with mobility issues and the visually impaired. Officers stated that equality of access was a significant aim of the project and they were looking to make the museum as accessible as possible, including additional resources to support those visitors with visual impairments. All five levels of the Keep would be physically accessible, which uniquely within the UK will include level access to the rooftop battlements.

10.10 Having received an update on the 2023/24 year end position, the Joint Museums Committee **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** the following:

1. Progress regarding development of the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project.
2. Progress in terms of the Museums Service's key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2022/23 and the Service's delivery of its Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation programme for 2023-26.

**There being no other business, the meeting closed at 15:24**

**Cllr John Ward, Chair  
Norfolk Joint Museums Committee**

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