

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28 July 2023 at 2.00pm at Norfolk County Council

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr Lesley Bambridge
Cllr Julie Brociek-Coulton
Cllr Daniel Elmer (sub for Cllr John Fisher)
Cllr Saul Penfold
Cllr Will Richmond (sub for Cllr Tony Adams)
Cllr Robert Savage
Cllr Karen Vincent
Cllr J Ward (elected Chair)

Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Cllr Geoffrey Freeman

Co-Opted Member (Non-voting)

Museum Friends

Felicity Devonshire

Norwich City council

Cllr J Huntley
Cllr Kate Oliver (sub for Cllr Claire Kidman)

Broadland District Council

Cllr Martin Booth

Breckland District Council

Cllr Robert Kybird

1 Election of Chair

1.1 RESOLVED

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

(Mr J Ward in the Chair)

2 Election of Vice-Chair

2.1 RESOLVED

That Cllr R Kybird be elected Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for Absence and Comments by Chairman

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tony Adams, Cllr Ed Maxfield, Cllr Ben Price, Cllr Claire Kidman, Cllr Jeremy Rowe, Cllr Liz Withington, Mr John Simpson Wedge and Mr Danny Keen.

3.2 The Chairman welcomed new members who were attending their first meeting of the Joint Committee.

3.3 The Chairman also welcomed the Norfolk Teaching Museum Trainees and fellows

from the British Museum's International Training Programme who were in attendance for the meeting.

- 3.4 The Chair placed on record the Joint Committee's thanks to Tim Shaw, Committee Officer, who would shortly be retiring from the County Council. Tim was attending his last meeting of the Joint Committee after serving as Committee Officer to the Joint Museums Committee for many years.

4. Minutes

- 4.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 April 2023 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chair.

5 Declarations of Interest

- 5.1 There were no declarations of interest.

- 6.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

6 Breckland Area Museums Committee

- 6.1 The annexed minutes of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 5 June 2023 were received and noted.

- 6.2 In introducing the minutes, Cllr Robert Kybird outlined the latest position regarding building works at the former King's Head public house, a listed building next door to the Ancient House Museum at Thetford, and the hard work that had gone into making the museum's *The Vikings, History on your doorstep* exhibition a great success.

- 6.3 Cllr Kybird also spoke about the wide range of events and activities at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, including activities associated with the *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* as well as the work on the Wendling Beck Environment Project (WBEP) which formed part of the wider *Gressenhall Access to Nature* project.

7 Great Yarmouth Area Museums Working Group

- 7.1 Cllr Geoffrey Freeman presented the annexed minutes of the Great Yarmouth Area Museums Working Group meeting held on 22 March 2023 which were noted.

- 7.2 In introducing the minutes, Cllr Geoffrey Freeman drew attention to the forthcoming inhouse curated art-based exhibition entitled *Turner and Bridges, Old and New* which would focus on the history of bridges, both in Great Yarmouth and nationally and celebrate the opening of the Third River Crossing.

- 7.3 During discussion of the report, the Committee's attention was drawn to the links that young people from Kick the Dust had built with students from Paston College in North Walsham in the production of an award-winning film about the Deep History Coast project. Cllr Saul Penfold, whom had Paston College in his division, asked if he could be kept informed about developments which were expected to lead to the production of a second film.

8 Norwich Area Committee

- 8.1 Cllr Jacob Huntley presented the annexed minutes of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 6 June 2023 which were noted.
- 8.1 In introducing the minutes, Cllr Jacob Huntley said that the Area Committee had received progress reports on the *Kick the Dust Project* and the *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project* and discussed the works that were in place to resolve the infestation of dry rot in the Shirehall.
- 8.2 Cllr Huntley said that Strangers' Hall was celebrating its centenary as a museum in July 2023. The celebrations included a full programme of activities at the museum, the reworking of the window displays (featuring key figures and objects from the museum's long history to entice visitors into the building), and the introduction of new exhibits. The Service was looking at creating a strong narrative based around historic characters linked to Strangers' Hall. The Chairman of the Joint Committee added that he hoped Joint Committee Members would be able to find the time to visit the museum.

9 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee

- 9.1 It was noted that King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Joint Committee.

10 Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2023/24

- 10.1 The annexed report (10) by the Director of Culture & Heritage was received.
- 10.2 The Joint Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) forecast budget out-turn for 2023/24 and details about the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions.
- 10.3 The Joint Committee noted the following issues:
- The Service was projecting an over-spend for 2023/24. This was attributed to significant uncertainty in relation to the main income streams following a slower than hoped return to normal, pre-pandemic visitor numbers and patterns. The cost-of-living pressures and reduced visitor offer in place at Norwich Castle Museum because of the ongoing work for the Keep re-development were also key factors.
 - It was noted, however, that that the first two-months of admissions income for 2023 was 24% higher than this time last year, along with secondary spend over double. It was hoped this very strong start to the year would be maintained to ensure any over-spend was minimised before Norwich Castle Museum fully reopened.
 - NMS continued to closely monitor all spend on utilities, given the continuing price increases by energy companies and the significant impact that this had on the operation of Service, especially over the winter period.
 - The detailed budget position for 2022/23 was as set out in the table at paragraph 1.1.5 of the report.
 - The roll out of events and activities associated with *The Last Voyage of the Gloucester* exhibition at the Castle Museum, the *Bare Bones* touring exhibition at Time and Tide in Great Yarmouth and the exhibitions and the events

programme for Gressenhall Rural Life Museum were having a positive impact on visitor numbers and on NMS income.

- The costs of the project management and contract administration for the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England project were being met as part of the cost of the project funding received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- The table at paragraph 1.2.3 of the report set out the capital building programme for 2022/23.
- The position regarding reserves and provisions was as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

10.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

To note the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast out-turn for 2023/24.

11 Norfolk Museums Service - Risk Management 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 Members with the latest Norfolk Museums Service Risk Register at July 2023. The Norfolk Museums Service risk register was last reported to the Joint Museums Committee in April 2023.

11.3 The Committee's attention was drawn to the following issues:

- There were no considerable changes to existing risks in the risk register since this matter was last reported to the Committee.
- Management of the NMS risk register complied with the way in which the risk register was managed for other services across the County Council.
- The risk register contained seven risks. Of these, five risks were actively being managed, as presented in Appendix A of the report, with the remaining two risks maintained on the risk register as low and continuous risks in their nature, as dormant risks shown in Appendix B of the report.
- When Norwich Castle Museum was brought back to full operational capacity from Easter 2024 this was expected to have a very positive impact on NMS income streams. There were, however, events outside of the control of the NMS, such as the impact of cost-of-living pressures and additional pressures on secondary spend that could have a negative impact.
- Where the NMS developed new projects with external trusts and other organisations (such as for *the Changing Tides redevelopment project* at Time and Tide) projects would be aligned to the new policy framework of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Discussions with the National Lottery Heritage Fund had, however, shown that this new policy framework was not expected to have any significant impact on the funding and strategic direction of new or existing NMS projects.
- NMS along with Brighton & Hove Museums Service had put in a joint application for continuing funding to deliver museum development for the south-east of England. This matter would be reported to the Joint Committee in October 2023.

11.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

To agree the active and dormant risks as per appendices A and B of the report and the key changes to risks as set out in Section 2 of the report.

12 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

12.1 The annexed report (12) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

12.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance of Norfolk Museums Service over the current financial year 2023/24 including the Service's award-winning learning programmes and the Service's work with groups including Looked After Children, carers and foster families, and vulnerable older residents across the county. The report also provided an update on all major projects, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported *Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England* project and youth development programme, *Kick the Dust Norfolk*.

12.3 In response to Members questions, the following points were discussed and noted:

- Members were encouraged to explore the links in the periodic performance report to museum blogs and museum activities that were designed to be of interest to a wide range of NMS audiences.
- The strong start to the season was attributed to good numbers visiting the Gloucester exhibition, plus good figures to the other NMS sites, including Gressenhall and Time and Tide.
- By the time that the Gloucester exhibition, created in partnership with the UEA, had seen c.50,000 visitors by the start of the summer holidays, with many more thousands of visitors due before the exhibition closed on 10 September 2023.
- The Joint Committees attention was also drawn to partnership working with Broadland and South Norfolk particularly in relation to development programmes linked to Market Towns, and a digital learning programme around Robert Kett. The Museums Service had delivered a range of partnership activities at Harleston at a special event on Saturday 11 March 2023, and a similar range of activities were planned to be held at Wymondham on 17 September 2023.
- The Joint Committees attention was also drawn to the superb painting '*Panoramic Landscape with Cornfields and Dunes Beside the Sea*' by the most influential Dutch landscape painter of the seventeenth century Jacob van Ruisdael that had taken pride of place in Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery. The acquisition was made possible thanks to a hybrid of the Government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme, together with generous support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund and the Rought Fund, The Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the Norwich Museums.
- The Assistant Head of Museums gave an oral update on the *Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn Project*. Details regarding the latest construction work and interpretation work were as set out in the periodic report and were regularly updated on the project website which outlined the latest position. The next stage in the development of the project would be the completion of the new visitor entrance, café and shop. Members would be provided with an opportunity to visit the site before the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- The Head of Development gave an oral update on the work of the NMS as an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) which in

future would be presented to the Joint Committee on a regular basis. The NMS was awarded £1,375,308 per year for 2023-26 for activity that contributed to ACE's 10 Year Strategy *Let's Create* which had 3 outcomes and 4 investment principles. The NMS was considered a minor risk in terms of ACE clients. The Head of Development said that she would be happy to provide details about any of work in the NPO to members on request.

- The Head of Development agreed to provide Cllr Alexandra Kemp with details outside of the meeting about how the King's Lynn museums had indirectly benefitted from the activities associated with the NMS attaining NPO status.
- It was noted that during Covid the NMS had created a lot of digital resources which were now available to schools both before and after school visits.
- The NMS 5-year strategy was due to conclude at the end of this calendar year. Members of the Joint Committee would be invited to attend engagement activities with other stakeholders and partners about the content of the replacement strategy which was planned to be created by Easter 2024.
- The publication on the Deep History Coast project was expected shortly and Members would be invited to celebrations to mark the event. The publication could be expected to lead to opportunities for other activities associated with the Deep History Coast Project.
- The NMS had participated with other Norfolk arts organisations in Creativity and Wellbeing Week a national festival celebrating the power of creativity and culture to transform our health and wellbeing, promoted by the London Arts and Health Forum and the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance and Norfolk now had more events than anywhere else in the country.
- In reply to questions, it was noted the Change Minds project was led by the Norfolk Record Office and supported by the NMS. The Head of Development would be able to supply Cllr Kemp with a list of the range of cultural programmes in Norfolk that supported mental health and wellbeing which was embedded into the work of the NMS.

12.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To receive an update on the 2023/24 Service position to date**
- 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 2022/23 and the Service's delivery of its Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation programme for 2023-26.**

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm.

13 Joint Committee Presentations

- 13.1** At the end of the formal part of the meeting, the Joint Committee received two presentations. The first of these was from Sarah Gore, the Teaching Museum Manager, and could be found on the County Council's Committee Website. The trainees, Alex, Daniel, Lucy, and Jasmine were present at the meeting, together with

fellows Aymen, Mustafa and Twana from the British Museum's International Training Programme.

- 13.2** This was followed by a presentation from Dr Robin Hanley, the Assistant Head of Museums, and outlined the latest position regarding the Kick the Dust Project. This presentation could also be found on the County Council's Committee pages website.

Chair

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