

NORFOLK JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 23 July 2021 at 2.00pm at Norfolk County Council

Present:

Norfolk County Council

Cllr Jane James
Cllr K Mason Billig
Cllr E Maxfield
Cllr S Penfold
Cllr R Savage
Cllr K Vincent
Cllr J Ward (elected Chair)

Norwich City council

Cllr J Huntley
Cllr M Schmierer

Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk

Cllr E Nockolds

Co-opted Member (Non-Voting)

Museum Friends

Mrs F Devonshire

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 (who had given his apologies for the meeting) be elected Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

3 Apologies for Absence

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Brociek-Coulton, Cllr B Duffin, Cllr R Everett, Cllr G Freeman, Cllr V Gay, Cllr D King, Cllr R Kybird, Mr D Keen and Mr L Wiseman.

3.2 Apologies for absence were also received from Mr S Miller, Director of Culture and Heritage (with Dr R Hanley, Assistant Head of Norfolk Museums Service attending the meeting in his place).

4. Minutes

- 4.1** The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 February 2021 were confirmed by the Joint Committee and signed by the Chairman.
- 5** **Declarations of Interest**
- 5.1** There were no declarations of interest.
- 6** **Matters of Urgent Business**
- 6.1** There were no matters of urgent business.
- 7** **Breckland Area Museums Committee**
- 7.1** The annexed minutes of the Breckland Area Museums Committee meeting held on 25 January 2021 were received and noted.
- 8** **Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee**
- 8.1** The annexed minutes of the Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee meeting held on 2 February 2021 were received and noted.
- 9** **King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Committee**
- 9.1** Cllr E Nockolds, Chair of the Area Committee, gave a verbal report on the activities of NMS in King's Lynn and West Norfolk including details about new planned exhibitions. She said that during the period April to June 2021 there were more than 2,200 visitors to the Lynn Museum and that many visitors were known to have travelled long distances from other parts of the country. The visitor figures compared favourably with those for Autumn 2020. Six schools with more than 50 pupils from each school had attended the Lynn Museum during the April to June 2021 period with only one school cancellation.
- 10** **Norwich Area Committee**
- 10.1** Cllr J. Huntley presented the annexed minutes of the Norwich Area Museums Committee meeting held on 2 March 2021 which were noted.
- 10.2** Cllr J. Huntley said that the June 2021 meeting of the Area Committee could not be held due to concerns about Covid-19. Instead of holding a meeting, Councillors who served on the Area Committee had received a progress report about school visits, the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project, the Kick the Dust :Norfolk Project (which continued to engage with young people throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period) and the Women's History Month Project (which highlighted many famous women from Norfolk whilst also remembering those whose story was less well known).
- 11** **Norfolk Museums Service - Finance Monitoring Report for 2021/22**
- 11.1** The annexed report (11) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.
- 11.2** The Joint Committee received a report that covered the Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) forecast budget out-turn for 2021/22 and details about the latest monitoring

position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions.

11.3 Dr Robin Hanley, the Assistant Head of Museums, drew the Committee's attention to the following main issues for consideration by this Committee:

- Covid-19 had made for significant budget pressures in relation to the revenue budget situation for 2021/22 and particularly a loss of income from admissions and commercial activity.
- The detailed budget position for 2021/22 was as set out in the table at paragraph 1.1.3 of the report and showed a steadily improving Covid-19 situation.
- Most NMS sites were currently open to the public but were operating at reduced capacity.
- NMS budgetary pressures were being managed by the County Council at CES departmental level.
- NMS had received vital financial support from MHCLG through the CES allocation of Government income support funds. This invaluable financial support at a Governmental and Departmental level (which ran until the end of June 2021) had helped NMS to offset the main service budget pressures.
- A grant from the DCMS Cultural Recovery Fund had also helped NMS to continue to provide a county-wide service and support critical projects over the short-medium term.
- The table at paragraph 1.2 of the report set out the capital building programme for 2021/22. This table showed that the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse playground improvements project was now largely complete and that work to develop Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse as an environmental hub would be an important ongoing project for the County Council until 2023/24.
- The position regarding reserves and provisions was as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the report.

11.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

To note the latest monitoring position of the revenue budget, capital programme, reserves and provisions and forecast out-turn for 2021/22.

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

12.3 The Assistant Head of Museums said that there were no considerable changes to the risk register since this matter was last reported to the Committee.

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

- The target dates for active risks had been amended to the end of September 2021. They provided a mid-financial year review point for risk scores.
- Risk RM14381 - Failure to successfully deliver the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project within agreed budget, and to agreed

timescales included an update relating to the scheduled internal audit that was carried out in March 2021 for the project, with a green rated acceptable audit outcome (no key issues to be addressed) in the audit report.

- The description in the report of the reputational impact of the failure to deliver the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project to agreed timescales predated the impact of Covid-19. The reputational risk described in the report was a worst case scenario and underlined that this was one of the largest projects currently being supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and a project that continued to generate a lot of media interest.
- The construction supply chain and price pressures for materials to be used on the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project (particularly the use of steel) was kept under constant review. In common with other projects of this scale, the project would continue to be monitored by an external National Lottery Heritage Fund monitor until after the completion of the construction phase.
- The timescales of risk RM14162 - Failure to generate additional income streams for 2021/22 in accordance with service plan was updated to reflect this financial year 2021/22 since last reporting in January 2021.

12.5 The Joint Committee resolved:

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

13 Norfolk Museums Service – Performance & Strategic Update Report

13.1 The annexed report (10) by the Director of Culture and Heritage was received.

13.2 The Joint Committee received a report that provided progress with performance of Norfolk Museums Service over the current financial year 2021/22 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.

13.3 The following points were discussed and noted:

- Due to Government restrictions linked to Covid-19, for most of the last 12 months NMS was unable to open more than three museum sites to the public. This was done on a stop start basis and at no more than 30% of normal visitor capacity.
- By the time that the Committee next met in Autumn 2021 visitor numbers were expected to return to something like normal levels.
- Whilst physical school visits for the first quarter of the year were modest, demand for online school services had remained high. The Museums Learning Team were kept very busy in responding to school requests for new digital content that involved providing a diverse range of school services on-line.
- NMS curated its own digital content and to a high standard.
- The You Tube channels for Norwich Castle and the NMS had included initiatives such as Talking Objects with Curators, with the Royal Palace Reborn team, and a series of videos, called 'Pictures in Perspective', which looked at

artworks from the Yarmouth collection, as well as lectures and short films produced jointly with the UEA and other partner organisations.

- It was pointed out that NMS took part in a wide range of national and local commemorations and publicity campaigns. These were as diverse as Holocaust Memorial Day, where people remembered the millions of people who had suffered under Nazi persecution and in other terrible genocides across the World and “the Dippy on Tour: A Natural History Adventure tour” which was currently on display at Norwich Cathedral in association with the Natural History Museum. Cllrs were encouraged to keep NMS informed of similar events where they considered that NMS could make a useful contribution.
- The Assistant Head of Museums gave an update on the Kick the Dust programme which had continued to run throughout the pandemic. This programme had a huge impact on the lives of many disadvantaged young people and was shaped and designed by the young people themselves. It was due to have ended in March 2022 but would now run until the end of November 2022. From the start of lockdown in March 2021 up to 14 July 2021 there were 3,677 interventions involving 1,428 young people who had taken part in 1,575 hrs of cultural activity, Despite Covid-19 restrictions, NMS had also delivered during that period 36 face to face sessions. This level of activity continued to compare favourably with the position found elsewhere in the country. The Kick the Dust project coordinator would be asked to attend a future meeting to provide a further update.
- The Committee’s attention was drawn to the Crome exhibition that would run at Norwich Castle until 5 September 2021, sponsored by the Friends of the Norwich Museums. The exhibition was also supported by East Anglia Art Fund and Arts Council England.
- The Committee placed on record thanks to the Friends of the Norwich Museums for all their support as they celebrated their centenary year in 2021.
- The Committee’s attention was drawn to the stunning photographic exhibition about the heritage and tradition of women working in the fishing Industry that would run at Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life until 19 September 2021.
- The Committee was pleased to hear that since the publication of the agenda for today’s meeting the Thetford Treasure Exhibition had opened at Ancient House Museum. This exhibition would run until 29 August 2022 and include 11 objects on loan from the British Museum.
- The Committee noted the schedule of works for the Norwich Castle: Gateway to Medieval England Project. The details were as set out in the periodic report. Members would be provided with an opportunity to visit the site as soon as this could be facilitated in accordance with Covid-19 protocols. A visual presentation about the project would be made to the Committee later in the year.
- The Committee was reminded that NMS was successful in its application to be included in the Arts Council England’s National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) family for the period 2018-22. NMS was awarded £4.812m for the four-year period. In addition to the NPO application, the Service submitted a successful application to continue as one of the nine national providers of Museum Development services through SHARE Museums East (SHARE Museums East was now described as a Sector Support Organisation or SSO). NMS was awarded £1.745m for the four-year period. An update on the current situation in terms of delivery of the SHARE Museums East programme would be circulated

to Members of the Committee after the meeting.

- It was noted that Members of the Committee would be provided with an informal opportunity in August 2021 to view completed and planned capital building projects at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, including the new children's adventure playground and the project to develop the site as an Environmental Hub.

13.4 The Joint Committee resolved:

- 1. To note progress on the 2021/22 position in light of the continued 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 key Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund programmes for 2021/22.**

The meeting concluded at 4 pm.

Chair

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