NORWICH City Council

# ITEM 4

**MINUTES**

**NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**14:00 to 15:20** **15 September 2015**

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| Present: | **City Councillors:**<br>Arthur (chair)<br>Blunt<br>Maxwell<br>Price<br>Thomas (Vi)<br>Wright | **County Councillors:**<br>Bremner<br>Dearnley |
| Co-opted Non-voting members: | Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society) Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums) Amanda Guyton (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Arts Fund) | |
| Apologies: | Councillor Buck (Broadland District Council)<br>Councillor Hannah (Norfolk County Council)<br>Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk District Council)<br>Councillor Morgan (Norfolk County Council)<br>Councillor Sands (M) (Norfolk County Council) | |

## 1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 2. Minutes

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2015 subject to the following amendments:

a) To note that Ceri Lamb was present at the meeting; and

b) Under item 7 of the agenda, to include a recommendation that the chair of the Norwich area museums committee would write to the museums education service to thank them for their work.

## 3. Norwich museums briefing for period June to August 2015

The head of operations and learning presented the report. He said that the Jeff Koons exhibitions had brought a range of visitors to the museums from many different demographics including families, students and young children. Members were pleased that the exhibition had given national recognition to the Norfolk museums service.
He reported that the Ana Maria Pacheco exhibition complimented the ongoing work in the keep and as a result, funding was being sought to keep the alabasters permanently.
The Vikings guide to deadly dragons exhibition was anticipated to be very popular with a broad range of schools and family activities in development.

Members were encouraged to visit the Lacock cup whilst it was on loan to Norwich castle.

The head of operations and learning said that the 'medieval madness' activities and the Jeff Koons exhibition had helped to sustain the 2014 record breaking visitor figures. It had been a strong year for school visits to Norwich castle and everything was on track to meet last year's high of 20,000 children visiting. The chair said that she had written to the museums education service to thank them for their hard work and that the letter had been well received.

The operations manager (Norwich) gave an update on weddings at Stranger's Hall and Norwich castle and said that they anticipated holding around 20 weddings in these venues in 2016.There had also been a significant increase in the number of conference and banquet bookings, rising from 2 last year to 20 this year.

A detailed breakdown of visitor figures was circulated and the operations manager (Norwich) said that overall visitors to Norwich castle were up to 72,000 this year to date compared to 71,000 last year. Other Norwich museums visitor figures were on a par or above those of 2014. In response to a member's question, the head of operations and learning reassured members that the methodology for collecting visitor numbers remained the same as previous years with figures being taken directly from the ticketing system, which included recording those using museum passes.

**RESOLVED** to note the Norwich museums briefing for period June to August 2015.

## 4. Collections for rationalisation

The collections development manager presented the report. He outlined the process followed for rationalisation of items. He said that the museums service tried to keep items in the public domain wherever possible, however, if an object was in a very poor or unsafe condition, it may be destroyed.

In response to a member's question, he said that the items on page 35 of the agenda, comprising textiles of a Chinese origin, had some interest from the South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection (SADACC). Although it had not been specified whether the disposal would be gifted or payment made, the collections development manager confirmed that they would be transferred free of charge. He

would also put a condition on the transfer that SACACC must keep the items for display and not sell them on.

**RESOLVED** to:-

a) Recommend to the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee that the objects listed in annex 1 of the above report are deaccessioned; and

b) Ask the collections development manager to place a condition on the transfer of items to SADACC that they must be kept for display and cannot be sold on.

(The operations manager (Norwich) and the collections development manager left the meeting)

## 5. Update on the keep project (verbal)

The chief curator gave a presentation to the committee on the progress of the keep project. He highlighted the historical importance of the keep and said that the aim of the project was to make it the premier tourist destination in the east of England.
Twenty two focus groups were to be held by the end of September 2015 made up of different demographics, including museum visitors, local communities and non-visitors.

In response to a member's question, he said that his team anticipated an additional 100,000 visitors to Norwich castle as a result of this project; however, as these figures were not required for the first phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid, statistics were still being worked on. The first expression of interest bid had to be submitted to the HLF by 6 December 2015.

A member expressed concern that the implementation of the project would be a huge undertaking for staff at a time when resources were limited. The chief curator said that he had very committed staff who were dedicated to making the project a success and thanked them for their hard work so far.

**RESOLVED** to note the update.

(Members adjourned to Norwich castle where they were given a tour of the keep by the chief curator.)

CHAIR