



## MINUTES

### NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

2pm to 4.20pm

11 December 2012

Present:

**City Councillors:**

Bradford (chair)  
Blunt  
Gee  
Thomas

**County Councillors:**

Ward (vice chair)  
Edwards  
Mooney  
Nobbs  
Scutter  
Toms

Co-opted Non-voting members:

Councillor Bracey (Broadland District Council), Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society), Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums)

Apologies:

City Councillors Ackroyd and Button; and Councillor Hornby (South Norfolk Council)

## 1. MEMBERSHIP

### RESOLVED to:

- (1) note that the city council has appointed Councillor Button to the committee following the resignation of Councillor Lay from the committee and the council;
- (2) approve the co-option of Brenda Ferris, who will represent the Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society on the committee, as a non-voting member;
- (3) record the committee's gratitude to Councillor Lay and Felicity Hartley (Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society) for their contribution to the work of the committee.

## 2. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2012 subject to item 2, The Norwich Museums, special events, first sentence, to insert "in December 2011" after the word "event" so that the sentence reads as follows:

“Councillor Edwards said that the library at Mile Cross had hosted an excellent event, in December 2011, on Christmas in the olden days.”

### **3. RATIONALISATION OF THE COLLECTIONS**

The collections development manager (Norfolk County Council) presented the report and explained that the Norwich Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) was undergoing a process of rationalising the collections and recommending the disposal of objects which could be better displayed by another organisation rather than kept in storage. He explained that the focus of displays at the Bridewell Museum had changed and that it was not possible to display all the objects. The list attached to the agenda papers comprised 20 objects of the 30 objects which had been recommended for disposal by the curator and endorsed by the NMAS rationalisation committee. The committee had removed some objects of significant local importance from the list. Members were asked to consider the recommendations for disposal and to make recommendations to the Norfolk Joint Museums committee. Members were advised that the recommendations for disposal complied with the NMAS acquisitions and disposal policy to ensure that objects were accessible to the public and displayed at other museums in Norfolk, including private ones, or the UK. NMAS undertook all reasonable measures to contact the donors or their successors before disposing of any items.

Discussion ensued in which the collections development manager answered questions and explained that it would be unreasonable to put conditions on disposing objects to other museums. Arrangements were usually made for the transport of the object to the new museum by the recipient. The storage of items was costly. Members of the committee considered that should NMAS not be able to achieve the recommended actions for each of the listed objects such items should be referred to this committee for further consideration before disposal.

#### **RESOLVED to:**

- (1) endorse the recommendations of the NMAS rationalisation committee as set out in the report and recommend to the Norfolk joint museums committee that it approves the disposal of the items listed in the report, subject to the following conditions:
  - (a) that all items are referred back to the Norwich area museums committee in the event of the recommended action not being achieved in relation to the disposal of that particular item;
  - (b) that Thorpe St Andrew's Town Council is offered the water bicycle and the body recovery beam (record nos NWCM:1975.461.1 and NWHCM:1975.491) if the Museum of the Broads is unable to accept either of these objects;
  - (c) that the spiked dock (record no NWHCM: 1977.191) is not offered to other museums via the Museums Journal if Norwich Heart is unable to accept it, but that it is referred back to the Norwich Area Museums committee as the committee considers that it is an item of particular importance to the history of the Guildhall and the city;

- (2) ask the collections development manager to report back to the committee on the outcome of the recommended disposals.

#### **4. THE NORWICH MUSEUMS**

The Norwich museums manager (Norfolk County Council) presented the report and answered members' questions.

Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Arts Fund) reported that the Norwich Castle Open Art Show had been very successful and had raised a record sales £31½k of which 35% would be donated to support temporary art exhibitions at Norwich Castle. The next Open Art Show would be held in the summer of 2014 to coincide with the "Wonder of Birds" exhibition.

During discussion members considered the activities provided for school sessions and it was noted that the themes, such as the 1960s had been requested by teachers to fit into the school's curriculum. The Norwich museums manager referred to the Christmas events and pointed out that NMAS worked closely with colleagues in the library service and the city council's events team to coordinate events across the services.

**RESOLVED** to note the reports and the statistics for museum visits 2012-13.

(Charlotte Crawley left the meeting at this point.)

#### **5. REVIEW OF THE NORFOLK MUSEUMS AND ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE (NMAS)**

(County Councillor Leggett who had been a member of the county council's cabinet's cross-party working group, attended the meeting for this item.)

(Councillors Nobbs and Toms declared an interest in that they were members of the county council's cabinet's cross-party working group.)

Councillor Nobbs, the chairman of the county council's cabinet's cross-party working group, presented the report which had been considered by the county council's cabinet on 3 December 2012, and introduced Councillor Leggett (also a member of the working group) who commented on the governance arrangements for NMAS and the need for meaningful service level agreements for the district councils that had museums located within its area. The working party had unanimously agreed the recommendations proposed in the report.

During discussion Councillor Nobbs answered questions, together with Councillor Leggett, on the consultation arrangements, which included members from those councils where there were museums, officers and fact-finding visits to other authorities' museums. The chair of this committee and the leader of the city council had been interviewed.

Discussion ensued in which the committee considered the working party's recommendations as set out in appendix A to the report and Councillors Nobbs,

Leggett and Toms referred to the report and answered questions. Members noted that NMAS staff had the opportunity to engage in the consultation. Councillor Nobbs pointed out that the working group proposed two models for the composition of the joint museums committee and was not proscriptive. The composition of the area museums committees would be part of the negotiations on service level agreements with the county council. Members welcomed the proposals for the Norwich area museums committee to make decisions on local matters and noted that where these had implications beyond the remit of the service level agreement these could be met by district council or external funding. This greater flexibility would enable area museums committees to consider the introduction of free entrance to museums; extend opening hours and maximise income generation by using museums for events, for instance and would reflect the needs of the local community and businesses.

The assistant director community services and head of library and information services (Norfolk County Council) advised the committee that on 3 December 2012, the county council's cabinet had agreed to receive the conclusions of the working group and the recommendations at appendix A of the cabinet report and to conduct further consultation with other interested parties and consider a detailed action plan at a future meeting. The cabinets of each of the district councils would have an opportunity to respond to the consultation, as would other interested parties. Copies of the report and letter had been sent to each of the district councils in Norfolk. The meeting of the Norfolk joint museums committee had been postponed from January to a date in February to enable the results of the consultation to be collated and considered by the committee.

**RESOLVED to:**

- (1) welcome the conclusions in the report of the chairman of the working group to the county council's cabinet on 3 December 2012 and endorse the recommendations as set out in appendix A to the report, subject to the following comments:
  - (a) Management, staffing and marketing –
    - (i) Members considered that staff engagement is very important and noted the need to clarify management reporting to the cabinet member at the county council as set out in recommendations 1 and 2.
    - (ii) Members noted that interaction with the district councils was set out under Governance arrangements, recommendations 14 to 21, but considered that the recommendations should clarify how senior managers also reported to the appropriate cabinet members at district council level (which was referred to in the chairman's summary to the county council's cabinet at the beginning of the report).
    - (iii) The committee requested that the wording in relation to recommendation 3 should be amended by inserting the word "exchange" to reflect the good practice of the NMAS

staff and therefore the recommendation should read as follows:

“NMAS staff should have “the opportunity to visit, observe and *exchange* good practice with other museum services”.

- (iv) The committee also concurred with recommendation 13 which suggested that an external opinion on the staffing structure and management of the service should be carried out from an experienced leader of another museums service before a decision was made on the recruitment and appointment of a new head of service.

(b) Governance arrangements –

- (i) Members broadly agreed the principles of the governance arrangements but considered that local arrangements and the co-option of other organisations and interested bodies to the area museums committee should be subject to further discussion.
  - (ii) The committee did not reach a conclusion on the proposed composition of the joint museums committee and this would be the subject of further discussion (recommendation 16).
  - (iii) The recommendation that heritage forums were established at district council level, as set out in recommendation 16, was noted.
  - (iv) Members welcomed the proposal for service level agreements and noted that the disparity in the level of financial contributions made by the district councils needs to be addressed (recommendations 19 and 20).
- (2) note that all the district councils and interested bodies will have the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the review of NMAS and that the city council's cabinet will respond on behalf of the council.

## 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**RESOLVED** to note that the committee officer will consult with members regarding the date of the next meeting of the committee.

CHAIR