



Norwich Area Museums committee

14:00 to 16:20

14 June 2016

Present:

City Councillors:

Brociek-Coulton (chair*)
Davis
Jones (T)
Maguire

County Councillors:

Hannah (vice chair)
Bremner
Dearnley

Co-opted non-voting members:

Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society), Ceri Lamb (Friends of Norwich Museums), Councillor Buck (Broadland District Council) and Councillor Hardy (South Norfolk District Council)

Apologies:

City Councillors Price and Thomas, County Councillors Morgan and Sands (M), Amanda Geitner (East Anglia Arts Fund) and Councillor Ward (ex officio member)

1. Appointment of chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Brociek-Coulton as chair for the ensuing civic year.

2. Appointment of vice chair

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Hannah as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions received.

4. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2016.

6. Norwich Museums briefing for period March to May 2016

The head of operations and learning and the operations manager presented the report. During discussion the officers referred to the report and answered members' questions.

The committee noted that there had been 45,000 visitors to the show *A Viking's Guide to Deadly Dragons* during its run to 30 May 2016, which equalled previous years' spring shows *Homage to Manet* and *Roman Empire*. The show had been aimed at families and children and visitor numbers had peaked during school holidays and weekends. The committee was amused to hear from Councillor Bremner that the Whiffers had fought off the Great Yarmouth Vikings to the adoration of the children in attendance.

The head of operations and learning said that there would be a procession of heavy horses at 11:30 on Saturday, 18 June 2016, from Chapelfield Park to Norwich Castle Museum and a ceremonial crate would be delivered to promote the British Art Show 8. This prestigious travelling show would include a presentation specifically tailored to reflect the East Anglian location and would open on 24 June 2016. The procession was organised in partnership with the city council's events team.

The committee noted that the current exhibition on trade tokens at the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and accompanying talks had been well attended by metal detectorists, enthusiasts and new visitors to the museum. Members welcomed the synergy between events at the museums and other events in the city, such as the Fashion Jam and the city council's One Planet Festival; and events at the Museum of Norwich and the City of Ale Festival. The chair said that the ERM CIC Norwich shoe industry community project had run an event at the Silver Rooms Community Centre. Members considered that the success of these projects and events were a credit to the enthusiasm of the curators and the learning team and provided an opportunity to engage with other interest groups and the wider community. Members also considered that specialist interest or taster events were excellent opportunities to view the collections, such as the Norwich Shawls, in detail.

During discussion the committee noted that the Friends of Norwich Museums had provided funding to support the fine art curator's research trip to Vienna researching artefacts pictured in the Paston Treasure painting that will inform the development of the Paston exhibition scheduled for 2018. Ceri Lamb said that the Friends of Norwich Museums had provided the funding for a bid by the keeper of historic art to conserve four or five works by Cloughton Pellow. The Friends has also supported the acquisition of a 12th to 14th century gold pendant cross. Brenda Ferris said that The Norfolk Contemporary Art Society had contributed to the acquisition of the Andrew Dadson painting.

Members noted that Norwich Castle had been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge and was therefore an approved venue for school visits.

The operations manager explained the arrangements for commercial bookings and the use of Norwich Castle and Strangers Hall as wedding venues, which generated additional income for Norfolk Museums Service. A debate on the referendum had been filmed for Channel 4 in the Shirehall and was broadcast on 6 June 2016. In

reply to a question from the chair, the head of operations and learning said that Norwich Castle was a museum first and a wedding venue second. There was a waiting room for wedding guests so there should not be any congestion at the entrance to Norwich Castle Museum.

The committee noted the visitor numbers had met performance targets and that the difference for attendances for May and April in 2015 and 2016 reflected where Easter fell and later half term holiday this year.

The committee agreed to the head of operations and learning's suggestion to invite the curators at the Museum of Norwich to give a presentation on the Dementia Friends project and the action plan.

The committee noted that the Museum of Norwich was the first museum in the region to host 150 artefacts on the Google Institute Website. Members sought reassurance that Norfolk Museums Service would retain the copyright of the images and, rather than deter potential visitors, virtual tours would promote and raise awareness of the collections to a broader audience.

The committee welcomed the news that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had awarded an initial development grant of £462,400 for the Keep Project. This was the first round and a further bid would be made for an earmarked £8.7 million at a future date. The first round bid supplemented by a £1 million government grant had been a strong bid and there was still a lot of development work and discussions with the HLF, the city council and English Heritage. The committee would be part of the process and it was suggested that Dr John Davis, should be invited to attend a future meeting to update the committee on the progress. The medieval exhibition would be contained within the keep where it was proposed to replace an additional floor at balcony level and other exhibitions and galleries in the museum would be largely unaffected. The 1960s extension would be replaced with a glass atrium, which would improve the flow of visitors to the shop, café and main part of museum and the sight lines to the keep. Members noted that at this early planning stage the works were anticipated to last around 12 months and the museum would remain open during that period. The development stage would consider the operational arrangements, including taking museum services out into the community and the need to review entrance fee arrangements to take account of any significantly reduced offer. The committee would receive regular updates at its meetings and it was suggested that Dr John Davis to give a presentation to a future meeting. The Paston Treasures exhibition would be on while the keep was unavailable to visitors.

Discussion ensued on staffing and the importance of retaining good quality curators and museums officers to ensure funding from the Arts Council and to ensure the success of projects such as the Keep Project, which was predicated on a high quality curatorial and learning expertise. Nine employees in the museums service were currently undertaking professional training to become Associates of the Museums Association. Training opportunities for museums staff was co-ordinated across all museums in the East of England through the SHARE workforce development programme and there were other subject specialist networks which benefited the organisation.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the Norwich Museums briefing for the period November 2015 to February 2016;
- (2) record the committee's appreciation of the invaluable support and financial assistance provided by the Friends of Norwich Museums and the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society;
- (3) invite the curators at the Museum of Norwich to give a presentation on making the committee more dementia friendly museum;
- (4) note that there will be regular updates on the Keep project at meetings and to ask Dr John Davis to give a presentation to update members at a future meeting.

(The chair agreed to take the following items as urgent business. The committee officer noted that Norfolk Contemporary Art Society and the Friends of Norwich Museums should be invited to submit a written report to be included on the agenda for each meeting.)

7. Norfolk Contemporary Art Society

Brenda Ferris, the chair of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society (NCAS), presented an oral report to update members on the activities of the society and its preparations for its sixtieth anniversary. She confirmed that the exhibition of the paintings in Norwich Castle's collections which the society had either lent, gifted or part-funded would be held in September. Sir Timothy Colman would open the exhibition.

A copy of the society's summer programme was circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. Friends of Norwich in Bloom

The chair reported that the international judges of Communities in Bloom would be judging Norwich on 7 July 2016 and would start their tour at Norwich Castle. She said that she considered that the history of the castle and its history would make an impression on the judges, one of whom was American.

RESOLVED to note the report.

9. Friends of Norwich Museums

RESOLVED to receive the spring edition of the Friends of Norwich Museums newsletter, which was circulated at the meeting.

10. Dates of meetings

RESOLVED to ask the committee officer to circulate dates of meetings for the civic year 2016-17.

(As agreed at the city council's annual council on 24 May 2016, meetings of the Norwich area museums committee will be held at 14:00 on:

Tuesday, 13 September 2016;
Tuesday, 13 December 2016;
Tuesday, 7 March 2017.

CHAIR