



MINUTES

NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

2.00pm – 3.55pm

7 March 2011

Present:	<u>City Councillors</u>	<u>County Councillors</u>
	Councillor Bradford (Chair) Councillor Collishaw Councillor Fairbairn	Councillor Ward (Vice Chair) Councillor Edwards Councillor Mooney Councillor Nobbs Councillor Joyce (sub Scutter) Councillor Bearman (sub Toms)

Co-opted Non Voting Members:	District Councillor Bracey (Broadland District Council)
	Felicity Hartley (Norfolk Contemporary Arts Society) Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Art Fund)

Ex officio Member:	County Councillor Dunn (Chairman, Norfolk Joint Museums Committee)
-----------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------

Also in Attendance:	Rachel Kirk (Norwich Museums Manager)
------------------------	---------------------------------------

Apologies:	City Councillor Banham City Councillor Lay County Councillor Scutter County Councillor Toms Vanessa Trevelyan (Head of Museums and Archaeology) Jeanne Southgate (Costume and Textile Association)
------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2010 subject to item 2 being amended in the section headed Visitor Numbers and admissions income to state that Councillor Grahame had suggested that the Regimental Museum included wider subject matters in the future including peacemaking and intervention.

2. GENERAL UPDATE ON NORWICH MUSEUMS

The Norwich Museums Manager presented the report and answered questions about the work of the Norwich Museums Service since the last meeting and forthcoming events.

Visitor Numbers and Admissions Income

Members noted the statistics for museum and study centre visits and school visits during the three month period.

Implications of Public Sector Budget Cuts

County Councillor Edwards referred to the proposed move of the Regimental Museum to the Castle Museum rotunda and asked about the type of cabinets which would be used to display the military uniforms. The Norwich Museums Manager said that the rotunda accommodated large full size cabinets in the rotunda gallery and staff would utilise the most effective methods of displaying the exhibits in this area. In response to a question from County Councillor Ward, the Norwich Museums Manager said that 75% of the exhibits currently displayed in the Regimental Museum would be included in the case displays and staff were investigating the use of new technology to enhance visitors' experience of the exhibits. Charlotte Crawley commented that the trustees were enthusiastic about the move to the Castle Museum, particularly in view of the potential for more visitors to see the exhibitions. Felicity Hartley asked what was being done to preserve the identity of the collection in the Regimental Museum exhibition. The Norwich Museums Manager said that the aim was to retain the idea of a museum within a museum and efforts would be made to ensure that the exhibits retained their own identity in the new location.

In response to a question from County Councillor Bearman, the Norwich Museums Manager said that the Shirehall would be completely re-organised to accommodate the costume and textiles collections and she explained details of the various phases of the relocation programme. In response to a question from County Councillor Nobbs, the Norwich Museums Manager said that if there were proposals to change the volume of space occupied by the Regimental Museum in the Castle Rotunda, there would be a full consultation exercise with the trustees in order to ensure that this important collection was displayed adequately. She also explained that the costume and textiles exhibits would be stored in the Shirehall as part of a study centre for research and enquiries purposes and would only be open to the public on request. In response to a question from County Councillor Ward, the Norwich Museums Manager said that there were no current plans to open the old court room in the Shirehall to the public in view of the current economic climate, but it was a proposal which could be reviewed in the future.

Salary Budget Savings

The Norwich Museums Manager answered a number of questions about the process for budget savings decisions taken by the design authority of the county council. County Councillor Nobbs expressed concern about the lack of consultation on budget savings proposals. City Councillor Grahame suggested that the panel considering the savings should be open to members of the public. The Norwich

Museums Manager said that it was more appropriate for these issues to be raised directly with the county council.

In response to a question from County Councillor Edwards, the Norwich Museums Manager explained that certain public events such as special lectures would attract additional income through extra admission charges.

Reduction in Energy Usage

County Councillor Dunn referred to the hazards of disposal of low energy light bulbs and asked whether the Museums Service were dealing with this matter adequately. The Norwich Museums Manager said that there were issues concerning the disposal of all lighting within museums premises but this would be alleviated by the use of LED lighting, the lifespan of which was considerably longer than alternative methods. Members welcomed the introduction of LED tracked lighting within the museums.

3. INCOME GENERATION

County Councillor Dunn suggested that visitors to the Castle Museum could exit the building through the shop which could encourage additional income through sales. The Norwich Museums Manager said that this exit route would be problematic when a large number of visitors were accommodated in the Castle but that staff were investigating alternative methods of increasing shop sales. County Councillor Nobbs suggested that County Councillor Mooney might be willing to review the retail shop operation and suggest improvements. County Councillor Mooney said that he would discuss the issue with the Norwich Museums Manager.

Charlotte Crawley suggested that the café and shop at the Castle Museum could be more actively promoted on Castle Meadow. The Norwich Museums Manager said that these had been advertised in various ways in the location to encourage customers.

District Councillor Bracey referred to previous discussions concerning proposed displays by other branches of the Armed Forces within the museums. The Norwich Museums Manager said that it would be difficult to accommodate additional displays from other services currently but this could be reviewed in the future.

The Bridewell Project

The Chair referred to concerns which had been expressed about the continued delays to the re-opening of the Bridewell Museum. The Norwich Museums Manager explained the reasons for the delays in completion of the project. Considerable discussion ensued during which members referred to the closure of the museum over a considerable period of time. The Norwich Museums Manager explained that the building work for the project would be completed within the target timescales but that it would take a considerable amount of further time to fit out the museum to a satisfactory standard. The Chair suggested that a note of explanation would be helpful to the public in order to enable them to understand the reasons for the delay to the re-opening. The Norwich Museums Manager said that there were plans to invite a range of stakeholders to view the building following completion of the works and to explain the current position concerning the re-opening of the museum. Discussion then ensued during which members were referred to the possibility of

partial opening of the museum in order to display some exhibits prior to the full re-opening. Members also referred to the proposed re-opening date in 2012 which could create conflicts with the London Olympic Games and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The Norwich Museums Manager said that it would be possible to include the re-opening of the Bridewell Museum as part of the cultural Olympiad.

Recent and Current Exhibitions and Events

Councillor Fairbairn referred to the large number of people who had attended the opening of the Restless Times exhibition and the extremely good quality of exhibits at the Art of Faith exhibition.

Gateway to Medieval Britain – Norwich Castle/British Museum Partnership

The Chair expressed concern that he had not been able to attend the launch of the project as it had not been possible to provide a wheelchair accessible bus.

External Signage

County Councillor Nobbs expressed concern that the committee had not had sight of the proposed designs for the new external signage. He suggested that members could be sent details of the designs and comments provided to the chair.

RESOLVED to –

- (1) note the report;
- (2) record the committee's concern about the continued delay to the re-opening of the Bridewell Museum;
- (3) record the committee's appreciation of work by all staff involved in the Bridewell Museum project;
- (4) ask the Norwich Museums Manager to arrange for members of the committee to be shown the proposed designs for the new external signs and provide comments to the chair.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

Museum Volunteers

County Councillor Edwards asked whether any measures were being taken to increase the number of museums volunteers. The Norwich Museums Manager said that funds had been secured to provide a post which would have responsibility for establishing how volunteers could be utilised within the museums service in the future but said that this issue had to be treated sensitively at a time of staff redundancies and that there were no plans to replace paid staff with volunteers.

World War I Centenary

City Councillor Fairbairn asked whether there were any plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War in 2014. The Norwich Museums Manager said that staff were beginning to hold discussions on how the museums service could take part in this commemoration.

CHAIR