



NORWICH AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

14:00 to 15:20

16 June 2015

Present:

City Councillors:

Arthur
Blunt
Lubbock
Maxwell
Price
Thomas (Vi)

County Councillors:

Bremner
Dearnley
Morgan
Sands (M)
Watkins

Co-opted Non-voting members:

Brenda Ferris (Norfolk Contemporary Art Society) and Charlotte Crawley (East Anglia Arts Fund)
Councillor Bracey (Broadland District Council)
Councillor Hornby (South Norfolk Council)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

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

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

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

3. APOLOGIES

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS / PETITIONS

There were no public questions or petitions.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2015.

7. NORWICH MUSEUMS BRIEFING FOR PERIOD MARCH TO MAY 2015

Dr Robin Hanley, head of operations and learning at Norfolk Museums Service, presented the report and answered member's questions.

He reported strong visitor figures for the exhibition entitled 'Homage to Manet', with just under 64k visitors between January and April. The exhibition had also garnered good national press coverage.

He explained that, to date, the Koons 'artists rooms' exhibit had received very encouraging levels of visits. As this would be the only UK showing of Koons' work this year, the service had strong expectations that these numbers would remain high.

Dr Hanley continued by explaining that:

- to accompany the *Sawdust and Threads* exhibit, a great range of offers were available to visitors;
- the exhibition *Build Your Own: Tools for Sharing* would be featured in an upcoming issue of *What's On*;
- *A Viking's Guide to Deadly Dragons* should engage children and families over the spring half term and Easter holidays;
- the annual *Museums at Night* opening was very well attended with a good reach to younger audiences;
- *The Paston Treasure* research project had been successfully crowdfunded and the resulting exhibit would be shown in Norwich and the US during 2018;
- The *Voices of the Workhouse* exhibit would include the Lorina Bulwer samplers (which had recently been featured on the BBC *Antiques Roadshow Detectives* programme);
- the eighth curator report – giving a sense of the broad range of activities across the museums service - was available in hard copy or PDF and copies could be obtained from Stuart Garner, operations manager, Norwich Museums;
- school visits to Norwich museums were already 500 up on the same time in 2014 – despite significant changes to the curriculum;

Stuart Garner, operations manager, Norwich Museums circulated the newly produced venue hire documents. He explained that a partnership had been built with Event House – a planning company who put the practical elements of any event into place. He confirmed that two bookings for Strangers Hall and one for Norwich Castle had already been taken and a number of additional requests to view the venues had been booked. He added that, despite the change on opening days as a result of making Strangers Hall available to hire, visitor numbers remained strong.

In response to a member's question, Stuart Garner explained that all items were insured by the museums service and that safe-guarding measures were in place during the events themselves. He explained that a 'practice wedding' had successfully taken place.

Responding to a further question, Stuart agreed that the rise in visitor numbers could – in part – be attributed to improved coverage in the national press. He praised Heather Guthrie, exhibitions officer, and the work she had undertaken to raise the profile of the museums service in the press.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. THE KEEP PROJECT (VERBAL UPDATE)

Dr Robin Hanley, head of operations and learning at Norfolk Museums Service, said that the next meeting should include a tour of the keep.

He explained that the project was very much still at the starting blocks, although a bid was being put together for submission to the Heritage lottery Fund in December 2015. The outcome of the decision – to be taken at a national level – would not be known until May 2016. He said that work on the bid was well underway and gaining momentum – including close work with the British Museum. If the project attracts the requisite funding, the initial aim is toward an Easter 2019 opening.

In response to a member's question, Dr Hanley said that no detailed operational plan (for the way in which the museum may operate during the period of closure of the keep) had yet been developed, but a report would be produced shortly.

RESOLVED to note the report.

9. NORFOLK CONTEMPORARY ART SOCIETY REPORT

Brenda Ferris of the Norfolk Contemporary Art Society presented the report, highlighting society events which had taken place.

She said that she hoped that the museums service could find the funding to continue the post of exhibitions officer. Dr Hanley explained that the service was also exploring ways of maintaining delivery of critical, high-quality programming if funding for the role could not be found. He said that different ways of staffing were being explored.

RESOLVED to note the report.

CHAIR