

MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2015

Present: Councillors Poole (Chair), Hodges (Vice-Chair), Charlesworth, Sinden, Street and Webb (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Howard)

Museum Association Representatives: Mr Adams, Mrs Purdey, Mrs Barrett, Mr Peak and Mr Palfrey-Martin

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Charman, Edwards and Howard and noted for Alison Hawkins.

The Chair reminded Councillor Charlesworth there was a conservative position on the committee which was vacant.

The Chair updated the committee on the status of the Old Town Hall Museum. Since the closure of the building, contractors had commenced works on improving the appearance on the outside of the building, inside the building structural works will be required. Since the Museum had closed, she advised that several local groups and interested parties had expressed an interest in using the Old Town Hall.

11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 13 JULY 2015

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record subject to removing the words ‘Vice-Chair’ from Councillor Howard and adding to Councillor Hodges, under members present; and under item 1, Apologies For Absence, replace the word ‘Councillor’ with ‘Mrs’ Erica Barrett.

Mrs Purdey corrected minute, No. 5, Curators Report, she asked that 1 member of the committee inspect the store with the curator every couple of months to ensure that all items are thoroughly checked for mould as there had been concern that mould had been missed on some items.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

13. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

None.

14. CURATOR'S REPORT

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to provide an update on issues arising from previous meetings and confirmation of Curator's actions.

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1. The main store has been emptied of items and works have started on interior cleaning and redecorating. Staff and volunteers continue to clean objects that have been removed from the store. The environmental heating system to monitor the store environment will be upgraded, readings transmitted to a computer for inspection, and the conditions inside the store regularly checked by staff. The Preventive Conservation Officer for SE Museums Development Programme has visited and will be presenting a further conservation training day for volunteers and staff. The oil paintings have been moved to the Keep providing more space. Councillor Sinden asked if there was anything that had been recovered which was beyond repair. The Curator confirmed that nothing has yet been identified as damaged.

2. Permission has been given for several image reproduction requests:-

- a) Images of Hastings Pier for a book to be written by Steve Peak for the Pier Charity
- b) Moss's 'Rescue at Hastings' for a self-published family history by Sarah Harris.

1. Filming of a documentary on the Piltdown Man for French and German TV will commence in late September at the museum. Councillor Charlesworth asked if a copy of the film could be provided with subtitles. In addition, she suggested that the film be screened at the museum to encourage visitors.

2. The Hawaiian Feather Cloak has been received by the De Young Museum of Fine Arts in San Francisco for their exhibition on 'Royal Hawaiian Featherwork – Naa hulu Ali'i'. The exhibition will finish on 28 February 2016 before it is transferred to Hawaii and returned in May 2016. The cloak has been well received and publicised in a full double page spread of their exhibition catalogue.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

15. RESILIENCE PROJECT UPDATE

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on the progress of the ACE-funded Resilience Project.

The Curator confirmed that the consultants had been appointed to carry out work to the Arts Council England funded Museum Resilience Project, this includes the newly appointed Spatial Designer from Adam Richards Architects for the later phase of the project.

The start-up meeting has taken place to discuss the scope of the project and consultant briefs have been confirmed. Timetables and evaluation plans have been drafted. The Museum Review and Creative Consultancy will take place between August and October 2015 and the Spatial Design Consultancy will take place between September and January 2016.

Visitors will now receive an activity sheet and event or visitor questionnaire produced by Culture Shift, asking questions about their experience to determine what they liked and didn't like. Audience engagement events for users and non-users have been

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arranged to take place at the Museum, Priory Meadow, in October. Councillor Webb recommended holding an audience engagement event at Kings Road, St. Leonards.

The final report will be produced in January/February 2016, with a presentation to stakeholders in March 2016. The Museums Committee will receive an interim report at its meeting on 30 November 2015. The curator suggested that subject to approval, she would arrange for the consultant to visit and speak to the committee regarding the project.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

16. LOCAL HISTORY DISPLAYS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on plans for the display of local history material moved from Old Town Hall Museum.

Since the closure of the Old Town Hall Museum, the objects have been moved and packed away and put into storage at the Corporate Archive. Items have been put into displays, including the ships' figureheads in the Long Gallery, the cases will be added to in October. Items relating to Waterloo were in the Lower Walkway. The Upper Walkway has had a display of collections from the 16th and 17th centuries. The local history material for the WWI exhibition is in the Upper Walkway. Public access to archives and collections has continued in the Long Gallery on Wednesdays.

An exhibition will take place next year in June 2016 to celebrate 950th Anniversary of the Battle of Hastings; it will tell the story since 1066 in 66 objects. The exhibition will follow a chronological framework whereby visitors can explore local and national events and individual stories.

Final sections of objects and stories to be included will be made by voting through public consultation and voting via social media and attending talks and pop up exhibitions in the museum. 20th century stories could include Tressell, Mods & Rockers, Grey Owl etc. The curator suggested that the Museum AGM could be part of the presentation giving Members of the Association an opportunity to vote.

A final case will be provided for the people's gallery for objects which tell community histories and hopes for the future.

The Logie Baird collection will be moved to new displays so that the current Baird gallery can be redisplayed to present the early history of the town from Prehistory through Romans to Saxons.

Mrs Barrett queried the position of the life size tapestries which had been on display at Tesco's, Hollington. Councillor Street, said they were in a poor state, but there are two tapestries in the Town Hall.

Councillor Hodges asked if it was possible to get the Hastings Embroidery panels returned to go on display in the Old Town Hall Museum. Councillor Poole, suggested that it would depend on what happens to Old Town Hall Museum.

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RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

17. **MUSEUM ATTENDANCE FIGURES**

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform members of figures for attendances, educational activities and use of the Museum's website for quarter 1 of 2015-16. Figures for April to June 2014 were submitted for comparison.

It was noted that the attendance figures for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery had increased by 839 when compared with the previous year. Similarly, numbers of pupils in organised groups had increased by 65. Participants in non-education provider sessions reached 758. The total number of visits combined for Quarter 1 was 11926.

The number of website visits had increased significantly by 4,708. At the time of the meeting, the number of followers on Facebook had increased to 681 and Twitter to 721.

The number of weddings and civil ceremonies had increased by 3 compared to quarter 4 last year. At the time of the meeting, a total of 17 ceremonies had been made for 2015-16 and 13 booked for 2016-17.

The Wedding Fair proved extremely popular with over 1,000 people attending on 13 September 2015.

A total of 190 people visited the opening of the Tod Hanson installation in the Durbar Hall for the Coastal Currents Festival. Figures were slightly lower than expected.

Councillor Street asked for an update on the new website. The Curator confirmed that they had uploaded the collections and photos, but were waiting for IT to enable the website. Members requested this not be delayed any further. Councillor Hodges said there were elements of the website which were not up to date.

Mr Palfrey-Martin, congratulated the curator on the Facebook and Twitter entries which he shared with others. The entries he said created interest and encouraging footfall into the museum.

RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

18. **MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform Members of forthcoming events and educational activities at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery during July to September 2015, for Quarter 3, 2015-16.

These included:-

Exhibitions

To July 2016: 'All at Sea'. Maritime paintings from the Museum collection.

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10 September to 4 October: 'Geo', Floor installation in Durbar Hall by Tod Hanson, for Coastal Currents Festival.

19 September to January 2016: 'Out of the Doll's House: Women in the First World War.' Includes work created by members of Hastings Women's Voice.

Events

2 October to 4 December: Weekly Local History lectures by Edward Preston.

9 October: Seckou Keita with Gwyneth Glyn, kora music for AfriKaBa

11 October: 'Voice and Piano' Concert with Mathew Craven and Judith Buckley. Museum Association event.

16 October: 'Sidney Little and Hollington Council Housing', illustrated talk by Andre Palfrey-Martin.

17 October: 'Untold Stories: Life Story workshop celebrating UK Older People Day & Black History Month.

24 October: 'Map of Me'. Spoken word performance about migration, developed by Papertale.

27 October: 'Medieval Mayhem'. Family Activity Day.

14 November: 'Out of the Doll's House'. Talk by Ann Kramer.

27 November: 'Roll over the Atlantic', one-man show by poet John Agard.

6 December: Museum Association AGM.

12 December: Carol Concert with the Occasional Singers. Museum Association event.

The Curator confirmed there were fewer exhibitions during quarter 3 because the exhibition gallery is being used as temporary storage for the items from the store

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Mr Palfrey-Martin congratulated the Curator on the current exhibition in the Long Gallery which he said was a fantastic event and had increased footfall into the museum.

RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

19. **MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS**

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report informing members of eighteen items acquired by the Museum in the last quarter and the names of donors. The items included: -

1. Raft 2012, reduction woodcut with hand painting, by Tom Hammick. Donor: Julian & Sophie Ansell
2. Photographic slides, photographs, certificates and other documents relating to Hastings Sea Cadets and Freemasons. Donor: Mrs J Jempson
3. Photograph of Hastings and Alf Torgeir Lommerud-Olsen, stationed in Hastings in WWII. Donor: Mrs R Tanner
4. Photograph of 5th Battalion Royal Sussex, 1933. Donor: Mr D Mendenhall
5. Grey Owl programme and news cuttings. Donor: Mrs J Bradley
6. Painting of Romney Marsh by Ruth Streatfeild (sister of author Noel). Donor: Mrs C Bell
7. Beaded purse, 1920s? Belonged to Mary Eliza Duke, wife of last governor of Bengal. Donor: Mrs A Duke.

The Curator informed the committee that item 7, the beaded purse was of no relevance to Hastings, so should not be accepted into the collection.

RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report and that item 7 be declined.

20. **ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)**

None.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.27 pm)