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MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2015

Present: Councillors Poole (Chair), Howard (Vice-Chair), Charlesworth, Charman, Edwards, Hodges, Sinden, Street

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

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from George Adams, Nick Sangster and noted for Councillor Erica Barrett.

The Chair updated the committee on the status of the Old Town Hall Museum. Since the closure of the building she advised that various options were being considered including a possible proposal from the Old Hastings Preservation Society.

Furthermore, the Chair also advised that since the departure of Councillor Lock, there was a Conservative vacancy on the committee. Councillor Charlesworth said she would inform her group.

2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 16 MARCH 2015**

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

4. **NOTIFICATION OF ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS**

None.

5. **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.

1. Most of the content of the main store has been moved to the temporary exhibition galleries to enable cleaning and repairs to take place. The conservation cleaning of objects by staff, volunteers, students and work experience continues. All archives and works on paper have been removed to the Keep for storage and cleaning. All items taken to the Keep are catalogued. A meeting is due to take place with the Councils Building Surveyors and (DCB contractors) to discuss issues concerning the ceiling tiles with a view to replacing or covering the ceiling with plaster board. Due to the temporary halt to the exhibition programme, staff have arranged a number of small displays and gallery updates.

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Councillor Hodges asked the Curator what action was being taken to ensure items returned from the Keep were kept clean. The Curator said the building was being cleaned and environmental controls upgraded which will enable the conditions to be better monitored. When the work is complete in June 2016, the temporary exhibition gallery will reopen.

Councillor Hodges asked if there was any form of digitisation to further protect documents when public look at them. The Curator advised the Keep were also taking copies of the documents.

2. Interviews for the consultants to work with the Museum on the ACE Resilience project took place on 9th July. A project meeting will be set up with stake holders to consider what type of museum want to be moving forward.

3. The Curator gave a verbal update regarding the preliminary discussions concerning HLF funding for exhibiting the local history material. She advised that they decided not to pursue the funding this year because of other priorities and because many of the items were in storage. She said they will consider submitting an application next year and feed it into Hastings and Heritage events by providing material. Mrs Purdey asked for assurance that the store environment will be monitored. The Curator advised that she would be happy to supply the readings.

The Curator informed the committee that Susan Ward, Exhibitions Officer, would be leaving to take up a new post. Consideration is being given to a temporary post to deal with collections management issues prior to re-advertising her post. Marion Purdey said she would not wish to see the post lost.

Councillor Charlesworth asked if the Elizabethan Charter could be displayed as part of the exhibition next year. The Curator said the Museum has a copy and they are looking to provide possible screen access to this as the original is too fragile. Early discussions had taken place for next year's exhibition on the story of Hastings since 1066; she said the Museum hoped to get the public involved by voting via social media etc for their favourite objects or stories.

4. The project based on the role of women during WWI continues with a display on 19th September. Facebook and twitter are regularly updated with events of 100 years ago. The Young Creators Group have started work on the topic of women's' roles. The Museum is also working with Hastings Women's Voice on a creative writing exhibition to be held on 19th September.

5. Permission has been given for two image reproduction requests:
a) Images of Bathing Pool for Café information boards
b) Images of White Rock Baths for Saville Jones Architects report.

The Curator said the BBC had recently filmed an episode of the Celebrity Antiques Road trip with Gok Wan, which includes a feature on the Brassey Collection.

The Curator advised the data collected for the 'Visitor Finder' was available and enable participants to compare website statistics. The Sussex Cluster participants include Jerwood Gallery, Bexhill Museum, Horsham Museum and The Novium. The

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preliminary findings were based on 38 questionnaires, the results are as follows:- Hastings has younger visitors than other museums; more first timers, and better gender split. The main reason given for visiting was to learn something; visitors were mainly accompanied by friends and family, and the visitors liked the atmosphere. The Curator confirmed she would provide quarterly updates.

Councillor Poole expressed her thanks to staff during an ambitious year.

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

6. 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 the fourth quarter of 2014-15. Figures for January to March 2014 were submitted for comparison.

It was noted that the attendance figures for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery had increased by 518 when compared with the previous year. However, numbers of pupils in organised groups had dropped by 1,138, due to a whole school visit by St. Paul's in early 2014. The total number of visits combined for Quarter 4 had increased by 4504.

Attendances to the Old Town Hall Museum had increased by 220 due to a flurry of visitors in the final month. The total number of visits combined for Quarter 4 had decreased by 4,580 when compared to the previous year.

The number of website visits had increased significantly by 8,910. At the time of the meeting, the number of followers on Facebook had increased to 615 and Twitter to 657, as well as regular Facebook visits of 5356 people in the UK, 186 in USA, 129 in Greece, 103 in Australia and 86 in Pakistan according to Facebook statistics.

Councillor Street mentioned that some businesses sell followers from twitter and facebook to increase figures. The Curator confirmed that some twitter followers did not have any connection with the museum.

The number of weddings and civil ceremonies had decreased by 6 compared to quarter 4 last year. 3 cancellations had been received. At the time of the meeting, a total of 15 ceremonies had been made for 2015-16.

The next Wedding Fair will take place on 13 September 2015.

Mrs Purdey mentioned that someone had looked at the Durbar Hall for a wedding, but declined because of painted floors. The Curator said the floor will be painted by Tod Hanson, artist, as part of the Coastal Currents Festival in September 2015. He will be making a false floor and will be there for two months. The exhibition dates have been moved so two of the booked weddings will not be affected. The costs of the third wedding will be covered by Coastal Currents. The art commission will be publicised as part of the Festival.

A new statistic is to be provided for the South East Museum Development for the number of activities/outreach events on and off-site, with non-education providers eg Scouts, local Arts Groups, Community Groups, Book Bugs, In2Play etc. This includes workshops, seminars, talks as well as family activity days. The number of participants

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in sessions for quarter 4 is 1535. The Curator added that this figure may be added to the agenda for information as their education figures tend to be more informal than formal.

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

7. **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 and the Old Town Hall Museum during July to September 2015, for Quarter 2, 2015-16. These included:-

Exhibitions

10 January 2015 to 3 January 2016: 'All at Sea'. Maritime paintings from the Museum collection, including Turner watercolour until 30 August.

1 June to 30 August: Waterloo 200, small display of related objects and pictures.

27 June to 6 September: Textiles by award-winning textile designer and weaver Caroline Richards.

18 July onwards: Refurbished Brassey Gallery opens.

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

19 September to January 2016: Women and the First World War.

Events

7, 14, 21 July: Out of the Doll's House. Workshop taster sessions with Hastings Women's Voice to explore what women were doing during WWI.

11 July: Young Curators Summer Project Workshop.

18 July to 30 August: Family activities in Brassey Gallery in association with Hastings-based artist Lucy Brennan.

23 July to 30 August: Family Holiday activities.

9 August: Piano Recital by Howard Southern for OHPS.

8 September: Private View for Coastal Currents installation.

11, 18, 25 September: Local History talks by Edward Preston.

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13 September: Wedding Fair.

The Curator confirmed there had been a slight delay with the events leaflet however, the leaflet had been signed off and would be with members the following week.

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

8. 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. 50 photographs and postcards from the 1920s and 1930s. Donor: Mrs J Middleditch;
2. Board commemorating opening of the Grove School, 1956. Donor: Mr M Baker;
3. Poster of Hastings by Walter Spradberry. Donor: Miss E Spradberry;
4. Photograph of Boer War soldiers. Donor: Mr J Dearnley;
5. Photographs, news cuttings, WWII documents etc belonging to Bernard & Kitty Card. Donor: Mrs J Soan;
6. 7 photographs of Breeds and Sinden families. Donor: Mrs C Poulton;
7. Programmes and posters for White Rock Baths and Hastings Pier. Donor: Mr M Glynn;
8. Postcard of Carlisle Parade. Donor: Estate of Mrs A Georgiou;
9. 14 photographs, mainly steam engines. Donor: Anon;
10. Hastings Observer 7/4/1927 (Visit of Prince of Wales). Daily Mirror 7/4/1927. Donor: Mr A Pepper;
11. Documents re introduction of electrification to Tonbridge- Hastings line, 1987. Donor: Mr A Palfrey-Martin;
12. O/S One-inch map of Hastings. Donor: Mr A Gunn;
13. 15 photographs of WWII bomb damage, photographed 1948. Transfer from Legal Services;
14. County Borough of Hastings fuel measures, 1960s. Donor: East Sussex County Council per Roger Cohen.

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RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report and is satisfied with the report.

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

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.20 pm)