

**MUSEUMS COMMITTEE
16 FEBRUARY 2011**

Present: Councillors Cartwright, Charlesworth, Chowney, Finch, Hodges and Webb (in the Chair)

Museum Association Representatives: Mr Adams, Ms Cornish, Mr Peak and Mrs Purdey

Apologies for absence were noted for Mrs Barrett & Miss Reed. Cllr Martin was absent on this occasion.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following councillors declared their interests in the minutes as follows:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Cllr Hodges	34	Personal - Trustee of Hastings Trust
Cllrs Hodges and Mr Peak	35	Personal - Trustee of Old Hastings Preservation Society

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2010 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record, subject to the amendment of item 28, the words ‘Eve Barratt’ to be replaced with ‘Erica Barratt’.

33. 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.

It was confirmed the Museum had maintained its Accreditation, administered by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). The accreditation was granted subject to the completion of the documentation backlog by December 2011 and the Security review due early 2011. Amendments to the Museum Accreditation scheme are being reviewed and will be published in Spring 2011. Cllr Webb thanked Cathy Walling and her staff for her hard work in achieving the accreditation.

A loan of 20 items to Leeds City Museum’s Lotherton Hall during 1 March to 31 December for an exhibition on ‘Warriors of the Plains’ has been accomplished.

The Museums collection of oil paintings will be included in the Public Catalogue Foundation’s (PCF) on-line publication of the printed catalogue of ‘Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in East Sussex. It is expected the on-line

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publication will go live during Summer 2011 and be fully completed by Summer 2012.

The Museums collection of material from the Museum Burton collection has been included in 'The Georgian' magazine by Elizabeth Nathaniels. Members of the Georgian Group will visit the Museum during May 2011 to view the collection. BBC North West was given permission to use a photograph of Robert Tressell for a programme on the centenary anniversary of his death.

Cathy Walling clarified the temperature arrangements at Castleham storage depot as detailed in the report.

The storage of archaeological archives within the County remains an outstanding and complex issue. A meeting of the Museums Association will take place on 3-4 October 2011 in Brighton to discuss factors concerning the storage of items. Members of the Committee will receive an update following this meeting.

The Committee discussed possible alternatives such alternative storage sites and the expiration of storage of items to free up storage space.

Members unanimously agreed the Tressell Exhibition was 'really well done', with attendance figures being higher than expected which exposed a market for future events in Hastings.

Cllr Webb said that he had met with Bill Murphy, Director of Community Services regarding access to records at the East Sussex Record Office to express the concerns of the Committee.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

34. UPDATE ON BUDGET PROPOSALS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on the proposals in the Draft Corporate Plan and Budget and to make recommendation to Cabinet on which day to close the Museum and Art Gallery. Full Council will receive the recommendations from the Cabinet and will make the final decisions on the Corporate Plan and Budget on 28 February 2011.

The Corporate Plan sets out the targets to be achieved during 2011/12 for the Museum to provide an exhibition and education programme for visitors to the museums and develop proposals for their long-term sustainability.

The Budget proposals address the recommendation to close the Museum and Art Gallery one day a week and reduce the operating budget for temporary exhibitions and education. Considerable research has been undertaken to determine the most appropriate day to close Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, the decision is to be determined by the Museums Committee. The closure of the Museum will provide finances to maintain the operation of the museum in light of financial constraints. Cathy Walling circulated to the

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Committee the proposed provisional figures that will be determined by Full Council.

The Committee discussed the implications of closing the museum one day a week. Mr Peak and Cllr Hodges stated their objections to the museum closing. Cllr Hodges established his objection for closing the museum on a Monday on commercial grounds. Mrs Purdey suggested that if the museum closed on a Monday it would be the least damaging and it would fall in line with the universal approach. She added that when financial constraints improve, the closure of the Museum should be reviewed.

RESOLVED – that the Museums Committee recommend that Hastings Museum and Art Gallery closes to the public on Mondays, but the closure should be reviewed when financial constraints are improved.

35. OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF THE OLD TOWN HALL MUSEUM

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on the progress on the operational review of the Old Town Hall Museum. The report contained the results of a survey. A questionnaire was sent to 500 members of the Museum Association, other local societies and to all schools in Hastings and St Leonards. Copies were also available for the public visiting both of the Museum sites. A total of 40 questionnaires were returned. The results will feed into the range of options for the future sustainability of the Old Town Hall Museum.

Cllr Finch stated that the Tourist Information Centre was fundamental to the existence of the museum which served a dual role enabling the public to purchase train tickets, accommodation and visit the museum. Cllr Chowney added that if the Old Town Museum closed, the Information Centre would do also. Mr Peak proposed that a meeting should be arranged to bring together all their ideas. Cllr Hodges agreed and suggested that alternative options should be considered. Members considered a number of proposals. Virginia Gilbert suggested that any proposals and an action plan could be discussed in a meeting arranged after February. The Committee unanimously agreed to discuss the matter at this time.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

36. 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 second quarter of 2010-11.

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Cathy Walling confirmed there had been a decrease in the number of visitors to Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and at the Old Town Hall Museum due to the adverse weather conditions experienced during December 2010. Educational visits were down due to uncertainties concerning school budgets. It was also noted that website hits were down in comparison to last years figures. Cathy Walling advised that she would contact the Communications Officer to seek guidance on this matter.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

37. MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform Members of forthcoming events and activities.

These include, amongst others:

- ‘Mugsborough: A Portrait of Edwardian Hastings’. 15 January – 27 March 2011;
- ‘Memories of a Victorian Water-colourist’. 9 April – 3 July 2011;
- ‘Coastal Landscapes’. From 22 January 2011;
- Exhibition of work by Photography students from Filsham Valley School. 15 January – 20 March 2011 and 26 March – 5 June.

Events:

- Series of 4 weekly lectures by Edward Preston. 14 – 7 March 2011;
- Hastings and St Leonards in the Time of Tressell – a talk by Brion Purdey. 5 March 2011;
- Spacedog – Performance with robots and electronics for National Science & Engineering Week – 12 March 2011;
- Light Beam Communication. 2 workshops for schools with Dr Jonathan Hare – NSEW – 16 March 2011;
- Tressell walk with Dr Trevor Hopper – 26 March 2011;
- Easter Egg Hunt at both Museums – 9 – 25 April 2011;
- Activities and trails inspired by the Coastal Landscapes exhibition – 28 March – 5 June 2011.

Mr Peak asked if the museum could run an exhibition on maps in light of the collection of maps the museum holds. Cathy Walling agreed that it was a popular interest.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

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38. REQUEST FOR LOAN

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to consider loans from the Museum collection.

A loan has been requested by Greenwich University to borrow the painting 'The Boat' by Laetitia Yhap for the International Conference on Fishing Communities. The exhibition will be held during 4 - 5 April 2011.

Cllr Cartwright asked if further information could be obtained and for photographs of it to be taken. Virginia Gilbert confirmed she would find out whether it was possible to run a press release concerning it.

RESOLVED - that the loan be agreed subject to confirmation that certain conditions are met.

39. MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented an updated report informing members of items acquired by the Museum since December 2010.

These included, amongst others:

- Two postcards of Hastings, 1960
- Two medals and two badges from NALGO Past President R.Hamm
- Nelson's Guide 'Hastings to Bexhill', 1908
- Packet of deeds to 20 Shepherd Street, St Leonards
- Ring box from W.J Brignall. Jeweller, 12 Kings Road, St. Leonards
- Carte-de-Visite photograph of Elizabeth Levett

RESOLVED – that the report be noted and the Chairman sign the acknowledgments of thanks to the donors.

40. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED - that the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business listed below because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt' information as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Paragraph No.</u>
41 (E)	Offers to purchase	Paragraphs 8 & 9

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41 (E) OFFERS TO PURCHASE

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report for the Committee Members to consider the acquisition of various items.

RESOLVED - that the offer be accepted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 10.30am)