

**MUSEUMS COMMITTEE
5 DECEMBER 2011**

Present: Councillors Charlesworth, Chowney, Finch, Hodges (in the Chair), Martin and Webb
Museum Association Representatives: Mr Adams, Ms Cornish, Mr Peak and Mrs Purdey

Apologies for absence were noted for Mrs Barrett, Miss Reed.
Councillor Cartwright

Councillor Webb took the Chair for the start of the meeting, as the Chair had submitted his apologies for lateness and the Vice Chair was absent.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

Councillor Hodges arrived and gave his apologies for lateness. He took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

23. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

24. 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.

The Curator stated that arrangements were in progress for members to visit East Sussex Record Office in early 2012. A range of dates will be emailed to the committee members to obtain their availability.

The Curator confirmed she had joined the Board of Trustees for Rye Museum which oversees the Museum collections and had attended one of the two annual meetings.

An action plan has been put into place on the draft Museum Volunteer Management Policy, it will be reported to the Museums Committee in March 2012.

Grant funding has been secured from MLA and the Cultural Olympiad to participate in the World Stories project in partnership with Brighton & Hove Museums. The Museums project is centred on the re-interpretation of the Native American displays which will be completed in May/June 2012. The curator thanked Catherine Harvey for her contribution to help secure the grant.

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Arrangements are in progress for the 'Outside In' project. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will provide practical workshops and support, and a touring venue for the exhibition during 2013. Two workshops and a 'surgery' day will be held in 2012.

Councillor Webb asked the Curator how the wider community would be informed of the event and where it would be publicised. The Curator confirmed a press release would be circulated to the same groups as last year and that members may forward it to interested parties if they wished.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

25. UPDATE ON COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on progress of the commemorative plaques programme.

The Curator updated the Committee on the status of the plaque for Alan Turing, she advised the plaque had been mounted on Baston Lodge by the owner and a small scale or private unveiling ceremony will take place in 2012.

The Committee were informed the plaque for Sidney Little had been ordered and that Listed Building Consent is required to mount the plaque which may take up to 12 weeks. Regrettably this will mean the plaque will not be mounted in time to meet the 50th Anniversary of Sidney Little.

The Committee agreed that if the plaque was temporarily mounted on an easel, a small scale unveiling ceremony could take place before the end of the year.

Steve Peak asked the Curator if the plaque could be moved to a more prominent position, rather than the underground car park. The Curator said this would be determined in time.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

26. UPDATE ON OLD TOWN MUSEUM

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on the progress of the review of the Old Town Hall Museum. Interested parties attended a meeting on 28 September 2011 to receive an update on the latest developments and to review actions points from previous meetings.

It is intended the printing press will be moved before the end of 2011. A free assessment by a retail advisor in December is also awaited.

Councillor Webb congratulated the Curator on the improvements he had noted during a recent visit to the Old Town Hall Museum.

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The next meeting will take place on 10th January 2012.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

27. 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 2011-12.

The Curator confirmed there had been a slight overall decrease in visitors to Hastings Museum and Art Gallery for this quarter. Education visits were also lower due in part to the schools being closed during the summer months. Furthermore, with effect from 1st April 2011, the museum was open 6 days a week instead of 7 days a week due to budgetary constraints.

It was noted that The Old Town Hall Museum had received a 30% increase in visitors. The figures for the Hastings Information Centre (HIC) and the Old Town Hall Museum have been recorded separately to record trends in footfall. This information will be reported for Quarter 3.

The total number of visits to hmag.org.uk website for Quarter 2 is 30,995. There were no comparable figures for this quarter because of a change to the way website hits have been recorded.

The Curator confirmed that during 2011, 24 weddings were held. A total of 19 ceremonies have been booked for 2012.

It was noted that educational visits to the Old Town Hall had increased slightly. The majority of education visits were made by Language Student Groups.

With regard to the increase in attendance figures, Marion Purdey congratulated the Curator and Catherine Harvey and all the staff for their work.

The Committee discussed the possibility of hiring out the museum for private events and parties. The Curator confirmed that enquiries had been received, but because of the level of fees charged, these enquiries have not resulted in bookings.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

28. LOAN BOXES AND SCHOOLS

Catherine Harvey, Education Officer, presented a report to inform Members of the current arrangements for loan boxes and feedback from schools.

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The Curator circulated the appendices for this report which had been omitted from the agenda, these were: List of Museum Loan Boxes and Letter to Schools, Sept 2011.

The Education Officer informed the Committee the Loan boxes had been very popular. Plans were underway to make two more loan boxes for use in 2012 for national history (Fossils & Skulls). Several boxes were available for members to view.

During the term a number of boxes had been loaned to schools and colleges, they comprised of the following subject matter: Victorian Toys & Games; World War II, Native America, and Skulls. Following the loan, feedback is encouraged on its usage, for example, how many children accessed it. The Education Officer confirmed that no items had been lost during a loan.

Councillor Charlesworth asked if groups such as the Guides and Scouts had been considered to use the boxes. The Education Officer advised that the loan boxes were available for any group to use. However, some groups meet when the museum is closed.

The Education Officer updated the Committee on the Access & Learning Policy which is to be reviewed. A consultation exercise is taking place with schools to obtain their support in developing a broader learning programme and consultation on its future priorities as part of the revision of the Access and Learning Policy currently underway.

Part of the consultation included sourcing and updating key contact details. The total return rate received from the schools was 15%. The consultant advised that this was a 'very good' return rate.

The revised Access & Learning Policy will be posted on the consultation pages of the Hastings Borough Council website, along with a letter inviting comments via the What's On e-newsletter. A questionnaire will be sent to teachers regarding the changes to the objective of the policy and to seek feedback on services provided by the museums and which collection areas would be most relevant to their curriculum.

The Education Officer advised she had consulted with Mark Horan, Policy & Partnerships Officer, to obtain his views on the best way forward.

Steve Peak suggested that Erica Barrett, would be able to advise on school matters.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

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29. MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform Members of forthcoming events and activities for Quarter 4, 2011-12.

These include:

- 'Rooms for Ideas' Contemporary Jewellery inspired by the Museum's collection. Until 19 February 2012;
- 'Diamond Jubilee Exhibition: 60 Years of Paintings from the Museum Collection'. 14 January 2012 – 6 January 2013.
- 'On the Map' An exhibition of historic maps from the Museum Collection and contemporary work inspired by maps and mapping techniques, selected from open submission. 10 March – 17 June 2012;
- 'The Seaside World of Punch and Judy'. Until 8 January 2012;
- The Xtrax Puppet Project. A display in the Upper Walkway about this multi-faceted project with local young people who have worked with puppet industry professionals and local arts organisations. Supported by East Sussex County Council and Hastings Youth Bank.

Events:

- Three special open days for public to drop in with Olympic photographs and memories for Museum staff to scan and record. 14 January, 14 February and 14 March 2012.
- Sub-Arctic Rattles Family Workshop. 21 January
- Outside In 'Step Up' workshop. Looking at the work of well-known outsider artists. 27 January
- Outside In Surgery day. 3 February
- Gallery Talk with The Line Up. 4 February
- Up-Cycle Your Jewels drop-in workshop. 11 February
- Free Roman Half-term Fun – When in Rome...At Old Town Hall and HMAG. 11-19 February.
- Roman Object Handling session at OTH. 14 February
- Roman Object Handling session at HMAG. 16 February.
- Simple Beaded Jewellery Design and Making workshop. 18 February.
- Museum Association excursion to British Library to see Royal Manuscripts exhibition. 19 February.
- Woodblock print workshop. 3 March.
- Illustrated talk on 'Art and Photography' by Dr Graham Whitham. 4 March.
- Travelling Around our World, Family activities for National Science and Engineering Week. 10 March.
- The Unbuilt Room – a Performance Game based on early text-adventure computer games. 17 March.
- Map-making Workshop. 17 March.
- 'Mapping Hastings', an illustrated talk by Steve Peak. 24 March.
- On the Map Workshop. 31 March.

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The Curator informed the Committee that in addition to the programme of events, an exhibition would be held in the Long Gallery during January 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Steve Peak offered to assist with the map-making workshop on 17 March 2012. He also recommended an exhibition on the Country Park. The Curator noted his suggestions.

Marion Purdey congratulated the Curator on the success of the exhibitions, in particular the Punch and Judy Show and asked that her compliments be passed on.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted.

30. MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented an updated report informing members of items acquired by the Museum in the last quarter.

These included:

- 4 local postcards;
- Watercolour of 'Promenade' Fish and Chip shop by David Hobbs;
- N.U.T. Conference book, Hastings 1908;
- Print of Hastings, View from West Hill;
- Sheet music for 'Hastings Carnival Song', 1935;
- Programme for Hastleons' Silver Jubilee Production of 'Bless the Bride', 1951;
- Photograph of Hastings Seafront, 1877;
- Collection of material relating to Henry Osborne, Printer, including licences, will, programmes, posters etc; The Curator confirmed these photographs would be framed and mounted adjacent to the press in the lower void of the Museum.
- Two Borough wax seals;
- Photographs of Royal East Sussex Hospital and staff, and material relating to Jimmy Moren, Cyclist.
- Photograph of HMS Warspite and hand-written reminiscences of Jim Hutchinson of Hastings.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.20pm)