

MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Councillors Poole (Chair), Hodges (Vice-Chair), Howard, Edwards, Sinden, Street, Purdey, Peak, Palfrey-Martin, Clarke and Dowling

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Charlesworth and Mr George Adams and noted for Erica Barrett and Alison Hawkins.

The Chair welcomed new members Councillors Terri Dowling and Martin Clarke to the committee.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

23. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

24. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

None.

25. 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. The recommendation for the Museum's Accreditation application will be determined by the Arts Council England on 19th November 2015. It is hoped the full accreditation will be received.

Actions to be updated on in a year or so:-

- Dealing with document backlog;
- Gatherine data on users and non users.
- Action fulfilled, we hope to receive the certificate shortly.

2. The Museums new and improved website has been updated and subject to a few remaining technical corrections will be launched at the end of January 2016. Progress had slowed down at the early part of the year due to staff changes.

The Curator confirmed the website would be proof read prior to the full launch in the new year. She added that they will eventually include copies of policy documents and any info or links relating to WWI, plus collections, events and access information.

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3. The Museum Store has been completely emptied, cleaned and redecorated. It will then take 6 to 8 weeks for the fumes to dry out and settle. The heating installation will take place on 14th December, followed by the installation of shelving before or after Christmas. The cleaning of parts of the collections is on schedule.

4. The Museum exhibition for 2016 'Story of Hastings in 66 Objects' has been publicised and a live survey linked to Facebook and Twitter and the Root 1066 website. The idea is to get people to suggest the most significant people, events and stories of the last 950 years.. Potential exhibits will be available to view on Facebook and at a Museum Association event in the New Year.

Councillor T Dowling asked if there had been much response and what the cut-off date was for the survey. The Curator confirmed that 12 responses had been received to date and that the survey will close in 66 days from when it was launched, on 31 January 2016.

5. Fossil specimens will be photographed for Sussex Geodiversity Partnership <http://www.geodiversitysussex.org.uk>. A pilot project which was undertaken with the Booth Museum to make people more aware of geological collections in Sussex, can be viewed at the above website link. The Curator confirmed that the Museum holds examples of type specimens.

6. The Public Catalogue Foundation is to change it's shared platform from 'Your Paintings' to 'Art UK' in January 2016 to facilitate a wider range of artworks, it will still work in partnership with the BBC. The Public Catalogue Foundation has already catalogued the Museum's collection of oil paintings. Hastings Museum will be given the opportunity to generate income from the Print and Demand activities and will be publicised on the ART UK website.

RESOLVED - That the Committee accept the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

26. RESILIENCE REVIEW UPDATE

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

Grant money has been received from the Arts Council England Resilience Fund for a 12 month project to conduct a review of Museum Services 'Finding Our Place'.

The museum consultant has met with museum staff and the stakeholders to undertake a review of the Museum services. So far the consultant has delivered a session on 'Developing a Vision for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery' and will be undertaking further training sessions on advocacy and customer care. The areas being considered in this part of the review are:-

- a. The effectiveness of current governance arrangements.
- b. An independent appraisal of the Museum's strategic positioning within the Local Authority structure.
- c. An informed understanding of different models of governance.

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- d. Reviewing the Museum's 'Vision' with staff.
- e. Training to assist staff in developing skills to advocate internally as well as recruit champions for the Museum.
- f. A review of current workforce with recommendations for future development.
- g. A review of income generation activity.
- h. Production of action plan with recommended short, medium and long-term actions.

The Creative Consultants have surveyed 500 people via event questionnaires, focus groups etc to gain information. The initial conclusions are listed below:-

- a. There is a surprising lack of awareness of the Museum by people in Hastings.
- b. Those who know the Museum recognise its value but are oblivious to what is happening when they aren't in the building.
- c. There is a lot of passion for the Museum but concern that only some voices are heard.
- d. From non-users, they encountered surprise at how much there is to see and how good it is.
- e. People value the old-fashioned feel of the displays but see room for some rethink and refresh in presentation.

Having completed their initial review of current spaces and emerging requirements, the Spatial Designers will be taking into account the public views collected by the Creative Consultants and their own research into visitor flow and requirements.

The final report will be produced in February 2016, with a consultation exhibition at the Museum; a sharing event and final progress report to Museums Committee will be in March 2016.

Monies left from the small underspend in the Resilience budget will fund a review of the Education Services and will focus specifically on the Museum's education service to schools. This review will draw on the findings from consultation undertaken in the other activity strands.

Steve Peak asked whether there were further plans for the museum in respect of the government cuts. The Curator confirmed that there was no current plan for reducing the budget and that reporting on different models of governance was a standard requirement of any discussion on resilience.. Furthermore, a full consultation would be carried out on any decisions made in respect of the budget process. Nick Sangster said the original reason for greater resilience that has been funded by Arts Council is that they understood government grants had been reduced.

Councillor Edwards asked the Curator if she was surprised by the fall in school visitor numbers. The Curator said she was not surprised and they had identified an underspend in the Resilience grant which will consider Education Services (schools) and will come up with some actions.

Martin Clarke sought clarification on the museums income. The Curator confirmed that there wasn't much possibility to increase income in addition to current sources such as the shop and café sales, weddings and event hire. She suggested that if the café was enlarged it could help and they were looking at the possibility of selling

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reproduction pictures to bring in a small income. She went on to say that the Museum Consultant felt that the museum was doing as much as it could currently to generate income.

Councillor Street recalled that previously there had been talk about selling items on the museum website. The Curator advised him that the museums software does not currently facilitate it.

Marion Purdey suggested that there was very little information provided about the museum in the Information Centre. The group agreed that this should be improved and recommended that posters advertising the museum be displayed.

Members thanked the Curator for her work.

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

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 quarter 2 of 2015-16. Figures for July to September 2014 were submitted for comparison.

It was noted that the attendance figures for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery had reduced by 437 to 13,119 for Quarter 2 when compared with the previous year. Similarly, numbers of pupils in organised groups had reduced by 811. Participants in non-education provider sessions reached 657. The total number of education visits combined for Quarter 2 was 1,905.

The number of website visits had increased by 1,816. At the time of the meeting, the number of followers on Facebook had increased to 749 and Twitter to 849.

The number of weddings and civil ceremonies had increased by 2 compared to quarter 2 last year. At the time of the meeting, a total of 19 ceremonies had been made for 2015-16 and 18 booked for 2016-17.

The curator advised the decrease in visitor numbers may have been due to the reduction in temporary exhibitions. She stated the number of pupils had dropped during quarter 2 since the majority of language schools visit during July to September.

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

28. MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform Members of forthcoming events and educational activities taking place at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery during January to March 2016, for Quarter 4, 2015-16. These included:-

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Exhibitions

To July 2016: 'All at Sea'. Sussex Coastal Scenes from the Museum Collection.

5 December to 31 January 2016: 'The Big Chill', photographs and Tom Hammick's 'Raft'.

From 6 February 2016: 'Finding Our Place, a New Vision for Hastings Museum'. The interim findings of our Arts Council funded project.

Events

16 February 2016: 'All Creatures Great and Small', Family Activity Day

Wednesdays in term-time: Little Explorers

Thursdays in term-time: Stay and Play.

The Curator confirmed the number of exhibitions had reduced now that the exhibition gallery was being used as temporary storage for the items from the store. Exhibitions will continue to take place in the upper walkway until summer 2016. Members should expect to see more events listed from June 2016.

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

29. ACQUISITIONS

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

1. 105 prints and engravings of Hastings and area, including Rye and Winchelsea
Donor: Mr H Jutsche
2. 19th century Bathing Cap, made by E & S Corpo, George St
Donor: Mr S Craig
3. Lindridge & Son keyboard cover; Daily Herald Insurance Certificates; Tickets for Gaiety Cinema; postcards; photographs; assorted leaflets
Donor: Mr P Fuller
4. Daily Mirror Coronation Souvenir; Sussex Downland guidebook
Donor: Mrs K Tichband
5. Non-idiomatic converter of Language devised by donor
Donor: Mr B Nicol
6. Copy of Daily Sketch dated 1915
Donor: Mrs C White

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7. Journal of Royal Sussex Regiment; History of Hastings Police; History of Royal Sussex

Donor: Mr R Whatley

8. Goss china 'memorial', collection of local tickets, cards, paper bags, badges

Donor: Miss S Hayward

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

Steve Peak asked for an update on the status of the Old Town Hall Museum. Cllr Poole confirmed Hastings Borough Council were still hoping to let the building and had received a number of proposals.

Marion Purdey invited members to attend a carol concert on 12 December 2015 at the museum starting at 7.30pm. All proceeds will go to the museum.

30. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.13 pm)