

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER 2023

Present: Councillors Batsford (Chair), Sinden (Vice-Chair), Evans, Jobson, Pragnell, Roark and Williams

Museum Association Members, Andre Palfrey-Martin, Susannah Farley-Green, Hilda Kean, Steve Peak and Richard Street.

Alice Roberts-Pratt Senior Curator, Caf Fean NPO Officer, Kevin Boorman Marketing and Major Projects Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillors Patmore

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 13/03/23

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2023 be approved as a true record.

Caf Fean introduced herself to the committee as the new NPO Officer looking after the national portfolio organization program. The Senior Curator explained we have also appointed Oriana Calman as Collections Access Officer and that's with the NPO funding. She's looking at how to make our collections more accessible to the public. Asten Holmes-Elliott has been employed as the new Museum Learning Officer

4. FORMAL/NON FORMAL MEETINGS AND THE TIMING OF THEM

The Chair explained there has been discussions around the formal and non formal meetings for some time. The group discussed the capacity of officers as well as child care needs for committee members. It was highlighted that there used to be four meetings a year, but this was changed in 2018. The group discussed the timing of the meetings and whether to have daytime meetings or evening meetings.

The Chair proposed, Seconded by Richard Street.

Agreed Unanimously

For there to be four formal meetings a year for the next three years. Starting at 10am,

5. NPO COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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The NPO Officer explained the NPO wraps the museums business plan together for the next 3 years. The plan is to have community members influencing the museum. The plan is to work towards 5 target groups for projects which include areas of deprivation, LGBTQIA plus community, people seeking sanctuary & disability groups. The aim is to coproduce projects with people. The plan is to have community members influencing the programming and the governance of the museum. It was explained there was a report created previously. The committee discussed having community members who have a connection to the museum but also connecting with community members who may not have been to the museum and involving them. It was asked if surveys have been completed. The Senior Curator explained further evaluation is needed. The NPO officer explained part of the stipulation of the funding as well is that there would be an annual review. Councillors discussed the museum committee opening to community members. This will be achieved by decreasing the number of councillors. The future for the museum committee will be to select wider community members to sit on the committee. The Chair explained there is a previous draft report and this will be reviewed and discussed as a reduction in Councillors on the committee will need cross party support. The report will be brought to a future meeting.

6. MUSEUM UPDATE REPORT

The Senior curator started by announcing the museum has won the south of England Prestige award for Art Museum of the Year 2023.

The Senior Curator presented to the committee on visitor numbers, the museum shop and weddings. The brick by brick exhibition was very successful over the easter period. The next long gallery exhibition opening Stored out of sight begins on the 16th September. In 2024 there will be The Ellen Prebble Exhibition and Playing the Race Card. The next exhibition in the Walk way will be ONEIROPRAXIS by the visionary artists Melissa Artemis Shemanna and Orryelle Defenestrade-Bascule. The Senior curator explained the outgoing schools and learning officer secured £2000 from SEMD for a going green project. Volunteering is slightly down as two volunteers have moved away but The NPO will see an increase in our volunteers to help with visitor services, collections and the outside spaces. There are building works ongoing and the Senior Curator explained there are future building works planned.

The group discussed the possible exhibitions that could be done moving forward. Recommendations included the history of Sidney Little. The group recognised the interest in History. The Senior Curator explained that local history exhibitions are planned. The NPO Officer highlighted that another role of the NPO is to have pop up exhibitions. The group discussed historical pictures and recordings and the possibility of these being digitalised for an exhibition in the museum. The group discussed the need to also acknowledge and raise up people who perhaps are overlooked in history.

The Senior Curator was asked regarding the weddings in the Durbar Hall and its marketing. The Senior Curator explained there is a need for better marketing. The group discussed the options for food and drink and an area to dance.

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The group discussed surveys and collecting data on where visitors are from. The Senior Curator agreed this needs to be completed to help with evaluation of exhibitions.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet.

7. **COLLECTIONS REPORT**

The Senior Curator presented to the committee on Collections care, Collections access, Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals. The Senior Curator explained there is a need for space and the Collections Access Officer has been reviewing Collection Storage areas and making recommendations for improved Collections storage. The storage capacity in Tonbridge Wells has been increased with re-racking and audit of archaeology. A possible storage area in Pevensey is being reviewed to help cut costs. In April a substantial insect pest infestation was identified in the main store in boxes of ethnographic material. The infestation was found to have spread to part of the taxidermy collection. The team have put in place a system of freeze treatment. The Durbar Hall has a roof that is leaking when there is a lot of rain. This may need some fundraising activities. The National gallery has requested a painting to be shown at the National Gallery, London from 6 June – 1 September 2024.

The group discussed the outside of the museum and how the boards can be used to market weddings and exhibitions. It was also highlighted the need to keep the grounds clear of weeds etc. The group discussed why the storage in Tonbridge Wells is used and the possibility of making savings. The Senior Curator explained there is air conditioning at the storage. The Senior Curator was asked regarding the destruction of items and how they are documented. The Senior Curator explained there is a very thorough process of going through for disposals.

The Chair gave thanks to all the Museum Officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

To accept this report and recommend approval by Cabinet

8. **MUSEUM ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

Richard Street gave an update. There was a visit to Rye Harbour in April regarding the Mary Stanford disaster, in May Doctor Trevor Hopper did a tour of Robert Tressell's Hastings, in June there was a visit to Rye with Bryant Purdy, in July a trip to Fairlight Church and graveyard. In September there was a talk on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and all its work throughout the world. On the 1st October there

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will be tour of the Commonwealth war graves at Hastings Cemetery. It was highlighted these were Museum association events and this needs to be clear on marketing.

Special thanks were given by all the committee to Kevin Boorman for all his work and support.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.57 pm)