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MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2016

Present: Councillors Poole (Chair), Howard, Charlesworth, Edwards, Sinden, Street, T Dowling, Mrs Hawkins, Mrs Purdey, Mrs Barrett, Mr Dudman, Mr Palfrey-Martin and Mr Peak

The committee held a minutes silence in memory of Councillor Hodges (Vice Chair)

31. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Clarke.

The Chair welcomed new Association Member, Geoff Dudman, to the committee.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record, subject to re-grouping the councillors and Association members names.

34. NOTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

None.

35. 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 curator confirmed that she had received the final report on The Arts Council-funded Resilience review which will be presented to the Museums Committee in June. The Committee were informed that the expression of interest for the second round of ACE Resilience funding had been submitted and that a further application will be submitted if required in due course.

2. ESCC funding will end in March for the Children's Centre pre-school two-weekly sessions (Little Explorers and Stay and Play in the Museum). The Museum will fund a new group - Museum Explorers - on Thursdays in term-time until mid-July and will be working with In2Play to deliver sessions for pre-school children and their adults to experience the Museum through stories, song and play. External funding opportunities are also being sought to continue activities after this pilot period. The Museum will also look to host the Library's Rhyme Time during the refurbishment period, a start date has yet to be confirmed.

3. The updated Museum website is nearly complete and will be ready in March.

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Mrs Barrett sought clarification on whom to contact to add Museum Association events to the Museums website. The Curator advised that Association events should be emailed to the Curator cwalling@hastings.gov.uk or directly to the museum museum@hastings.gov.uk.

4. Hastings Pier will be using 42 copies of the Museum's historic images in their digital archive which is part of the interpretation scheme in the new Visitor Centre. The Museum will be acknowledged with each image.

Councillor Charlesworth asked if a note could be added to the images to advise people to contact the museum for further information. The Curator agreed that she would look into this.

Images of the White Rock Baths have recently been used in newspaper and television publicity for the opening of the Skate Park.

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

36. LOCAL HISTORY DISPLAYS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on the progress of the Local History displays.

1. The local history material will be going on display in 2016 as part of the town's celebration of the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. The exhibition will open in June 2016 and will tell the story of Hastings since 1066 in 66 objects, since Norman times through the collections of the Museum. The exhibition will have a chronological framework through which visitors can explore local and national events and individual stories.

2. Public voting (now closed) took place on Facebook and through an online survey, on some of the stories and objects that will be included in the exhibition. Among the most popular stories which the public wish to see featured are: the Battle of Hastings, the changing coastline, the Elizabethan harbour, smuggling, the coming of the railways and Robert Tressell. Objects that have appeared on Facebook so far are: smuggling, World War I, Medieval and John Logie Baird.

3. The Before Hastings: Prehistory to Saxon gallery opened on 12 March. The 'Story of Hastings in 66 Objects' will open on 25 June, with a private view on Friday 24th. The curator said that both events: the opening of the gallery and private view went very well.

Mrs Purdey thanked the curator and museum staff for the new display and talk by Casper Johnson.

Mrs Barrett explained that the talk was organised by Marion Purdey of the Museum Association, which may not have been apparent at the event.

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

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37. REQUESTS FOR LOANS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform members of the following requests for loans of items from the Museum collection which have been received.

1. JMW Turner's watercolour 'Hastings: Fishmarket on the Sands, Early Morning' has been requested as a loan by The Frick Collection, New York, for an exhibition entitled 'Passages through Time: Turner's Modern and Ancient Ports'. The exhibition will be held from 23 February to 14 May 2017 and the costs will be paid by the organisers.
2. The 1834 lithograph of St Leonards, will be loaned to The Cite de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine in Paris, for an exhibition devoted to the history of seaside resorts, entitled 'Tous a la Plage!'. The exhibition will run from 18 October 2016 to 13 February 2017. All costs will be covered by the borrowing institution.
3. Littlehampton Museum have requested the loan of material relating to smuggling for their summer exhibition 'Smuggling, a Gentleman's Trade?' which runs from 16 July to 19 September 2016. The exact items are to be decided, as priority will be given to our own exhibition.
4. The Southbank Centre have requested the loan of a Japanese print and a netsuke for an exhibition of work by contemporary work by Elizabeth Price. The loan did not take place as the Southbank Centre were looking for a specific style of art.
5. The Hawaiian feather cloak that was on loan to De Young Museum, San Francisco, will be returning to Hastings in mid April. The exhibition of Royal Hawaiian Featherwork will no longer be transferring to Hawaii because the museum has scheduled another exhibition.

Mrs Barrett raised concern about the amount of time the JMW Turner's watercolour is away on loan and is therefore less visible locally. Mrs Hawkins advised members, that the public are able to see the watercolour when it is in rest at HMAG if staff are available. Councillor Street said he felt that the public will not know that it is at the museum if it is not on display and that HMAG should give precedence to their own displays. Councillor Edwards suggested that the website is updated with a special feature when it is at HMAG. Councillor Poole said it may not fit in with a current display if there are others scheduled at that time. Mr Dudman asked if it was possible to loan items from the Frick Museum.

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

38. 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 3 of 2015-16. Figures for October to December 2014 were submitted for comparison.

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It was noted that the attendance figures for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery had reduced by 506 to 9,743 for Quarter 3 when compared with the previous year. This was because the number of previews had reduced. Numbers of pupils in organised groups had increased by 50 to 694. Participants in non-education provider sessions reached 1,980.

The number of website visits had increased since quarter 3 2014/15 by 2,279 to 45,088. At the time of the meeting, the number of followers on Facebook had increased to 892 and Twitter to 968.

The Curator advised that they are able to post on social media to respond to events quickly.

The number of weddings and civil ceremonies remained the same (0) compared to quarter 3 last year. At the time of the meeting, a total of 19 ceremonies had been made for 2016-17. Two cancellations had been received, probably due to the reduced fees at the Town Hall.

It was noted that the next Wedding fayre will be held in April.

Councillor Edwards queried the purpose of collecting the figures for 'all' visitors. The committee informed him that it was a useful indication of the number of people using the building/footfall; its popularity; education patterns, calculating statistics, providing information for scrutiny reviews and seeking funding.

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

39. MUSEUM EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

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 April to June 2016, for Quarter 3, 2015-16. These included:-

Exhibitions

Until 4 September; 'All at Sea', marine paintings from the collection. JMW Turner's 'Fishmarket' will be added to the display from 18 June.

16 April to 3 July: 'In the Footsteps of Annie'. Photographs by Louise Kenward who tracked the voyages of Lady Brassey over 11 months.

7 May to 10 July: 'Natural Capital' by Maslen and Mehra. A new ceramic piece in response to the Museum's Modena Dish.

From 25 June: two new local history galleries. 'The Story of Hastings in 66 Objects' and 'Wish you were here - Hastings as a seaside resort 1794-1964'.

Events

25 March to 10 April: Free Easter Egg Hunt.

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From 14 April: Museum Explorers, a regular Thursday session for parents/carers and pre-school children.

24 April: Wedding Fair

31 May: Family Activity Day to celebrate the Durbar Hall's 130th birthday.

10 June to 24 June: Local History talks by Edward Preston on Friday mornings. The talks will run in three sessions, commencing during May half term; June/July and September/October.

24 June: Private View of 'The Story of Hastings in 66 Objects'.

Mr Peak asked if the 'Story of 1066' display could include St. Leonards and smuggling, in particular 'Captain Swing' who provoked the Poor Law Act and formation of the workhouses in Hastings. The Curator said it was a good suggestion.

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

40. MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

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

1. Ten postcards of Hastings, early 20th century
Donor: M. Miller
2. Hastings Grammar School cap, 1934
Donor: P. Sudell
3. Copy of 'Sajo and her Beaver People' by Grey Owl
Donor: Mrs M Pettett
4. Hastings School attendance medal, 1911
Donor: M. Crouch
5. Copy of 'The Tree' by Grey Owl
Donor: W. Smith
6. Chad Valley jigsaw of photo of Fairlight Glen
Donor: Mrs C. Shoesmith
7. Masonic records of G.H. Burgess, Derwent Lodge
Donor: Mrs C. Welch
8. County Borough of Hastings School sign from Grove School
Seventeen Grove School registers
Donor: M. Baker

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Members questioned whether the pupils listed in the school registers would be affected by the Data Protection Act, as some of the pupils may still be alive. The Curator confirmed she would check and advise the committee accordingly.

9. Six engravings, sketch, photographs and documents relating to artist Arthur Rigden Read

Donor: R. Martin

The Curator advised that an exhibition of Arthur Rigden's and Eric Slater's works, may take place in Spring 2017.

10. Drawing of Guestling Hall, 1827 by John Martin.

Donor: Estate of Mrs A Stevens

11. Collection of 20th century Inuit Art

Donor: S. Mounsey

The Curator suggested that some of the African material may be used in the school boxes to complement the existing items.

Mrs Barrett raised concern regarding the breakdown in communication concerning the donation of S. Mounsey's art, and asked what guidance was in place for staff to know how to handle requests from donors. The Curator advised that the relevant guidance for donors will be available to view on the new website under the Collections Development Policy (formerly the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy) and that staff are trained to respond to requests from donors.

Mrs Barrett informed the committee that she wished to donate a post war 1960's-1970's Janson Bathing Cap; a music sheet and two jewellery boxes from Rix's jewellery shop in Hastings. The Curator confirmed the new acquisitions will reported at the next meeting.

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

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

None.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.42 pm)