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MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors Forward (Chair), Bacon (Vice-Chair), Howard, Patmore, Sinden, Street, Edwards

Museum Association Representatives: Mrs Barrett, Mrs Purdey, Mr Peak and Mr Palfrey-Martin

105. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were noted from Councillor Cartwright and Geoffrey Dudman.

106. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

107. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2017 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

108. NOTIFICATION OF ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS

With the agreement of the Chair, the Committee agreed the Curator report on an additional three acquisitions received after the agenda was published.

109. CURATOR'S REPORT

The Curator presented a report which updated the committee on issues arising from previous meetings and subsequent actions that had been taken.

It was noted that the Curator's report will in future include matters which reoccur more regularly such as attendance figures, exhibitions and events information. The loan requests; acquisitions and resilience project will remain as separate report items.

The following items from the museum's collection have been reproduced. Photograph of Robert Tressell for new Penguin Random House edition of the 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, and the coloured lithograph of birds-eye view of St. Leonards to be published in 2018 by Amberley Publishing.

The Ceramics Gallery has been updated to include new themes and labels. This includes some new pieces and items from the store which have not been shown for 25 years.

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In response to a recommendation in the first Resilience report, the internal signage has been revised and redesigned by HBC graphic designers, using colours and symbols to help visitors find their way around the museum.

Mrs Barrett requested the items in the ceramic gallery are rotated so exhibits are changed regularly. She congratulated staff on the new labelling, stating it is large; clear and at head height. The Curator said she would pass the compliment to Catherine Harvey, Keeper of Art & World Cultures and Sarah Fretwell, Graphic Designer.

Barrett proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Councillor Howard.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report

110. INTRODUCTION TO MICHAEL COOKE, MUSEUM RELATIONSHIP MANAGER ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

The Curator advised that due to unforeseen circumstances Mr Cooke was unable to attend the meeting. Mr Cooke will attend on a future committee date.

111. RESILIENCE PROJECT

The Curator presented a report which updated the committee on the progress of the two museum resilience projects.

The project, which was funded by Arts Council England, aims were to define the Museum's core purpose and develop a vision to enable it to grow and develop its services to meet future challenges.

Finding our Place 1, commenced April 2015. A five-point action plan was developed to address the outcomes of the review and identify a number of short term actions. Eg internal signage. These have been completed.

Finding our Place 2, commenced October 2016-2018. Focuses on four areas of improvement, identified in Stage 1 of the review. Eg visibility; audience engagement and project expertise.

Finding our Place 3, will follow completion of the current project and will undertake initial planning for the development and submission of Heritage Lottery Fund capital bid. It will investigate new approaches to income generation and engagement with existing and potential audiences.

Applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund can be made at any time. It is expected the application will follow completion of the current Finding our Place project.

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Councillor Street said the vision for the museum was narrow and needed to incorporate 'visitors' rather than 'the people of Hastings'.

Mr Peak said the size of the archives would benefit from being increased by a large capital sum. The Curator explained storage was included in the capital programme.

Councillor Howard suggested selling items on-line as part of the income generation strategy. The Curator said it would be dependent on a number of factors: the Council's IT system to support the activity and staff capacity for people to pack and post items. The retail consultant will assess whether this is feasible.

Councillor Edwards asked how the rates were established and if consideration had been given to hiring out the Long Gallery and Durbar Room to local groups in the voluntary / charitable sector. The Curator advised the hire rates were determined by interest rates and staffing costs. Although the fees and charges were fixed for 2018/19, they will be reviewed by the Business Consultant. She said help is given to local community groups during the day time.

Councillor Edwards asked how much the fees for the Long Gallery were. The Curator advised the charge for half a day is £66, £132 for a whole day and £420 and £510 for evening hire.

Mrs Purdey said the museums fees were on a par with other museums. Maidstone Museum offer more, however their café is supplemented. She felt £450 was too expensive for the Long Room.

Councillor Bacon asked if there was a co-ordinated approach to working with 1066. The Curator advised they are marketed by 1066. She said the consultant will review this area of work. In respect of funding, Councillor Bacon asked if schools could pay for a box of loan items. The Curator advised him the service was free and they were recommended not to charge for the loan of the school boxes.

Mrs Barrett said that if the schools were charged a fee for the loan boxes they would not visit. She stressed the Consultants should be made aware that school visits would drop. The museum she said needs to be competing, the arts venues are second to none in Hastings. She recommended the museum holds concert events in the evening.

Councillor Edwards proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Mrs Barrett.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report.

112. REQUEST FOR LOAN

The Curator presented a report to inform members of a request for a loan from the Museum collection.

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The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford is holding a landmark exhibition entitled 'Spellbound: Thinking Magically, Past and Present' from September 2018 to January 2019. It is the first large scale installation to explore the concept of 'magical thinking', of how people connect with unseen world.

A request has been received for the loan of a 16th century cast-iron fireback used to ward off witches and evil spirits and to protect the chimney, requiring magical protection. All costs associated with the loan and insurance will be covered by the Ashmolean Museum.

Mrs Barratt suggested the Museum hold it's own exhibition on legends myths and magic. The curator confirmed the exhibitions had already been scheduled for next year, but it would be considered as a future event.

Councillor Patmore proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Mr Palfrey-Martin.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report

113. MUSEUM ATTENDANCE FIGURES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform members of figures for attendances, educational activities and use of social media for the second quarter of 2017-18. Figures for July to September 2017 were submitted for comparison.

The Curator reported an increase of 703 visitors to the Museum between July and September, compared to the same time last year. This includes the Museum's 125th Anniversary Party in August which attracted around 1,200 visitors and 300 went to the Family Activity Day in July. The popular Eric Slater exhibition on 'The Colour Woodcuts', attracted visitors from all over the country.

Student numbers were slightly down this quarter. It was noted that a number of schools from outside the area had booked education sessions with the Learning Officer. The Library's popular Family 'Rhyme Time' continues to be popular.

At the time of the meeting, the number of followers on Twitter had increased to 1,523 and Facebook to 1,701. The museum held a 'take over day' for young people aged 14yrs to 19yrs. They took over Facebook and Twitter for the day, focusing discussion on the museum objects. The most popular post on Facebook was a set of photographs of Central St. Leonards in 1967 which reached 14,000 hits.

There had been a fall in the number of weddings and civil ceremonies over quarter 2, from 8 to 2 compared to the same period in the previous year. Other venues in the town had reported a similar trend.

Mrs Barrett, praised the special consultation event held by the young people, attended by 60 visitors. Unfortunately it was conflicted by other events.

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Mrs Barrett proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Councillor Street.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report

114. MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Curator presented a report which gave an overview of the events and activities that were planned at the museum between January and March 2018.

Exhibitions

An exhibition on 'A Sense of Place' runs until 11 March. Followed by the 50th anniversary memorial exhibition of the works of Vincent Lines, Head of Hastings School of Art. In the Upper Walkway there will be 2 contrasting painting displays – artist Peter Waldron's Louloudia Series of works inspired by Crete, followed by 19th century topographical views by Evacustes Phipson.

Events

There will be two Family Activity Days in Quarter 4, based around ceramics and buildings. During the building activity day, families will be able to create their own town model. An adult mosaic masterclass to be held in February 2018, led by Emma Harding and in March filmmaker Rebecca Marshall they will talk about her work exploring 'time' in 'Fever of the Light'. The Museum's popular Easter Egg Hunt will be back at the end of March for the school Easter break.

The adult Wreathmaking workshop was well attended with 12 participants. Attendances will be monitored to see if there is an appetite to provide more adult classes.

It was noted the Happy Harold Trolley Bus would be at the museum on 1st April 2018.

Councillor Street asked the Curator if it would be possible to reproduce some of the exhibition pictures in poster form. The Curator confirmed that postcards had been made of some of the paintings. Members were informed that pictures could be ordered and paid for 'on demand' at the Fishermen's Museum desk. The Curator advised the Business Consultant will be undertaking a review of the museums assets.

Councillor Sinden proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Councillor Bacon.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report

115. MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

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The Curator presented a report which provided an overview of the items recently acquired by the museum in the last quarter and the names of donors. The items included: -

1. Three folders of photographs and ephemera relating to the firm WM Still & Sons, Hastings
Donor: Mr A Chapman
2. Two commemorative issue first day covers for Hastings, 1966 and 1968
Donor: Mr A Gunn
3. Photographs, medals and ephemera relating to Edwin Bradnam, former Mayor of Hastings
Donor: Mrs D Parker
4. Pier programmes and photographs of donor's father making engine models
Donor: Mr D Holdstock
5. Television and radio Guide, 1930s
Donor: Mr C Bendon-Hill
6. Booklet - FJ Parsons, One Hundred Years of Printing
Donor: Mr I Shiner
7. Portraits, photos, diaries and deeds relating to Joseph Green and property in Ashburnham Road, Hastings
Donor: Mrs J Phillips

With the agreement of the Chair, the Curator reported on the following items which were received after the agenda was published.

8. Three publicity leaflets
Donor: Gairloch Heritage Museum
9. Wedding veil, photographs and postcards
Donor: Mr K Crouch
10. Records of births in Hastings 1836-1891, photographs and postcards relating to Gabb family
Donor: Dr J Gabb

Councillor Street spoke about the difficulty accessing items in the archives. He asked for accessibility to be improved when the review takes place.

Mrs Barrett requested the births and record book is not sent to the Keep for archiving. She said genealogy had become a popular activity, so the record book needs to be easily accessible at the museum for people to use it.

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In agreement, Mr Palfrey-Martin said that local history was of the greatest interest to people. 95% visits relate to family housing and photos. He recommended the maps at the Keep be returned to the museum.

Mr Palfrey-Martin proposed a motion to recommend the resolution as set out below. This was seconded by Councillor Street.

The Curator confirmed there would be an update at the next meeting regarding the recent attempt to acquire the painting discussed at the last meeting.

RESOLVED that the committee accepts and is satisfied with the report.

116. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 3.33 pm)

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