

Minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 6 September 2011 in the Committee Room, Old Abbey House.

**Present:**

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	Chairman
Cllr Monica Lovatt	Vice Chairman
Cllr Jason Fiddaman	
Cllr Hermann Matheson	
Cllr Helen Pighills	
Cllr Andrew Todd	
Chair Finance and General Purposes Committee/ Leader	(ex-officio)
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	Vale of White Horse District Council Representative (co-opted)
Mr Peter Clare	Museum Friends (co-opted)

**In Attendance:**

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Sandra Hill	Deputy Town Clerk
Dr Lauren Gilmour	Curator
Mrs Jane Bowen	Interpretation, Media and Display Officer
Ms Carol Anderson	Museums Services Manager, Oxfordshire County Council

One member of the public

**M15 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from the Mayor of Abingdon, Cllr Michael Badcock and Cllr Patrick Lonergan.

**M16 Declarations of Interests**

Cllrs Julie Mayhew-Archer, Helen Pighills and Jason Fiddaman declared personal interests as Members of the Vale of White Horse District Council who provide grant aid towards the Museum.

Cllrs Sandy Lovatt and Marilyn Badcock declared personal interests in agenda item 11 (i) as they are Members of Oxfordshire County Council who provide the curatorial contract for the Museum.

**M17 Minutes**

Minute 8 – Improvement and Access Project Board

The Chairman expressed thanks to members of the Project Board who freely give their time for the development of the project, and also to employers who provide the services of their employees.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2011 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record

**M18 Matters Arising**

Open Day at the Museum Resource Centre, Standlake

The meeting were informed that a session for specifically for Abingdon Town Council

representatives would be at 2.30pm on Sunday 9 October.

M19 **Financial Report**

The Town Clerk spoke to the report previously circulated, stating that the revenue costs for the running of the museum would be much reduced for 2011/2012 due to the closure of the museum. He further explained in detail the project expenditure as outlined in his report, highlighting the repair and conservation work, building work and the various sources of funding. He informed the meeting of the council's disappointment that the application for English Heritage Funding was not successful.

**Resolved** that the report of the Town Clerk be approved.

M20 **County Hall Museum Improvement & Access Project**

In considering the report it was suggested that the display rooms should be named after benefactors.

The meeting discussed the museum opening hours, working days and bank holidays and **resolved** that

(a) it would be open from 10am – 4pm, Tuesday to Sunday and on Easter Monday, May Day Monday, Spring Bank Holiday Monday and August Bank Holiday Monday.

(b) that it would be closed every Monday - except for Bank Holiday Mondays as stated in (a), and from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day (inclusive).

A Member questioned the design of the proposed banners which are to be placed on the outside of the Museum. It was **resolved** that the Interpretation, Media & Display officer would email the designs to the Committee for comments, before they are submitted to the conservation officer.

**Resolved** that a tour of the museum would be arranged for early October, in the early evening.

**Resolved** to note the report of the Curator and her Team.

*The Chairman, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, suspended the meeting at this point due to a disturbance at the meeting caused by a member of the public. A member of the public left the meeting at this point, following which the meeting recommenced.*

M21 **Response to a question from Dr Les Clyne to the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 14 June 2011.**

The Chairman reported that there was not a written response to this question. However the Museum had always relied on the work of volunteers to supplement the work of the paid staff and would continue to do so in the future. It was noted that the question referred to reducing the effort spent on marketing. She commented that marketing of the Museum previously had been minimal and whilst it was necessary to increase the marketing for the re-opened facility, the budget would be relatively small.

The Curator stated that it was projected that revenue costs would increase in the re-opened Museum and outlined the reasons, which included the fact that the public would have to more than three times the amount of building areas and displays,

throughout opening hours. The use of volunteers was being looked at as part of the business planning, but there needed to be an appropriate balance between voluntary and paid staff. The staffing projected, which is the equivalent of three full-time Museum Assistants, in addition to the Curator and part-time administrator, was the appropriate level of staffing for this facility; this had been carefully checked against a draft rota and was necessary in order to provide sufficient cover to open the building as planned.

**Resolved** that the Curator would draft a response to Dr Clyne's question, and that this would be presented for consideration at the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 13 September 2011.

M22 **Abingdon Museum Friends**

Peter Clare spoke to his previously distributed report, further outlining the Friends fundraising achievements so far. He highlighted the success of the recent Bun Throwing raffle in commemoration of the Royal Wedding, and asked the committee to consider whether they would allow the Museum Friends to conduct a similar raffle to celebrate the proposed royal visit to officially open the museum. The chairman outlined that this proposal would be considered once the official opening date and proposed royal visit is confirmed.

The Chairman outlined that the Town Council is a member of the Abingdon Museum Friends therefore everyone from the town council is welcome to attend all meetings of the Museum Friends. She relayed thanks to the Friends for their efforts in raising the museum's profile and for their successful fundraising.

**Resolved** to note the report of the Abingdon Museum Friends.

M23 **The Abingdon Sword**

The Interpretation, Media & Display officer reported that a replica of Abingdon Sword is available to the museum for long-term loan.

It was reported that previous enquiries have been made of the Ashmolean Museum regarding the possibility of the Abingdon Sword itself being loaned to the County Hall Museum. The meeting discussed the merits of approaching the Ashmolean Museum requesting the loan of the Abingdon Sword so it could be incorporated into the new Abingdon display. It was stated that a long-term loan would be most unlikely to be granted as a principle of loaning such items would be that they would normally only be loaned out if, by so doing, there would be increased public access to the exhibit; having regard to the high visitor numbers at the Ashmolean and its proximity to Abingdon, this principle would not be met.

It was **resolved** that in order to increase the chance of success, the Museum should write at a later stage for a short term loan. It was also **resolved** that a link from the Museum to the Ashmolean be created, highlighting the Abingdon Sword's presence within the Ashmolean Museum.

M24 **Future Meeting Dates**

**Resolved** that the agreed meeting date for 8 November 2011 should be changed to 1 November 2011, and to note the meeting dates of 10 January 2012 and 28 February 2012.

M25 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

**Resolved:**

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

- Abingdon County Hall Business Plan 2011-2015: Members are asked to consider the previously distributed Plan.