

Draft Minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on Tuesday 3rd September 2013 at 7pm in the Committee Room, Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer
Cllr Jason Fiddaman
Cllr Patrick Lonergan
Cllr Monica Lovatt
Cllr Aidan Melville
Cllr Andrew Todd

Chairman
Vice Chairman

In Attendance

Mrs. Jane Bowen
Peter Clare
Ms Françoise Jackson
Mr Matthew Stevens
Mr Nigel Warner

Curator
Abingdon Museum Friends (Co-opted)
Collections Officer
Facilities Assistant
Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)

M14 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from; Cllrs Samantha Bowring, Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (ex-officio) and Sandy Lovatt, Chairman Finance and General Purposes / Leader (ex-officio). Apologies were also received from Cllr Helen Pighills; the Committee noted that her sister had recently died and asked that the condolences of the Committee be passed onto Cllr Pighills. The Committee also received apologies from Mrs Carol Anderson, Museum Services Manager at Oxfordshire County Council; unfortunately, Mrs Anderson was unwell and the Committee asked that their best wishes be sent to her.

M15 **Declarations of Interest**

None

M16 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the County Hall Museum Management Committee of 14th May 2013, as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved that the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee held on 14th May 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

M17 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

M18 Financial Report

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Members noted that the budget for 2014/15 onwards would be challenging due to the changes which had arisen from the localisation of Council Tax Support. The reduction in the Council Tax base for 2013/14 meant that the amount raised from the Council Tax at a level of £106.01 (Band D) had reduced by £120,883. This had been partly offset by a grant from the government amounting to £101,397 meaning that for 2013/14 the Council had to find savings against its budget amounting to £19,486.

The indications were that over the coming five years the amount of grant received by the Council would reduce by approximately £20,000 per year and the Council would have the challenge of deciding how to address the shortfall in funding. In reality, this was likely to be achieved in a number of ways, increasing income and reducing expenditure. It was also noted that financial pressures on the principal authorities were likely to lead to an increased drive to devolve services to town and parish councils. Consequently the Council would need to achieve savings where it could, and clearly these were best delivered if they were planned. It was noted that The Council's net budget for the current financial year was £1,329,045.

By 2018/19, when the grant would have been phased out, the Council would need to have found savings of £101,397, or 7.6%. However, this did not take account of any inflationary pressures, so in real terms the savings would likely need to be double that.

It was noted that at the next meeting the Committee would need to consider its budget for 2014/15 and would need to have due regard to the Council's overall financial position.

Resolved that the report of the Town Clerk be approved.

M19 Curatorial Matters

The Committee received and considered the report of the Curator, as circulated with the agenda.

The Committee noted that the first anniversary of the opening of the Museum had been on 7th July 2013 and that in the first 12 months over 31,500 people had visited the Museum. The Committee noted the special exhibitions which had been held over the summer period. It was noted that the local group of the British Association of Friends of the Museum were holding their annual meeting in Abingdon on 10th September and that the Museum would be undertaking a number of activities over Heritage Weekend.

The Curator reported that the Council would shortly be receiving the invitation to apply for museum accreditation and the submission deadline would be 15th April 2014. This would mean that all the documents would have to be approved by the March 2014 meeting. These included the three year Forward Plan, which would need to link to other Town Council projects and the acquisition and disposal policy.

The Committee considered the proposal that the Curator apply for a micro consultancy grant in order to assist with their proposed review of the Natural History collections. It was **resolved** that authority be delegated to the Curator to apply for a grant to pay for this review.

The Committee considered the temporary exhibition programme 2013 to 2017, as detailed in the appendix to these minutes. It was noted that the list was a consolidation of previously approved as well as proposed exhibitions. There were also still some periods for which temporary exhibitions were yet to be arranged.

It was noted that the exhibition in relation to the fire station in Abingdon was to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the station.

In relation to the proposed “Abingdon – a Town at War 1914-1918” exhibition, the Collections Officer stated that the Museum had a very extensive and impressive collection of World War 1 and 2 posters.

It was **resolved** that the exhibition programme as detailed in the appendix to the minutes, be approved.

In relation to the proposed leaflet for the Museum, this was circulated to Members. Members asked that the District Council, as a major funder of the Museum, should have their logo included on the leaflet. Members noted that the leaflet was subject to final proof reading, and this would include the designation of the Museum as proper noun.

It was noted that research work had been undertaken by Bob Frampton into the stories of local people relating to the First World War and the Curator considered that this would make an interesting booklet that could be sold in the Museum shop. Members requested that the Curator make further enquiries into the cost of publishing such a booklet, including an application for an ISBN number. It was also noted that the book “Pride of Place”, which outlined the history of the County Hall, had now sold out. The Town Clerk was asked to approach Peter Gale regarding the possibilities of updating the book to reflect the recent improvement project and to re-print the booklet.

Resolved: that the report of the Curator be approved.

M20 Collections

The Committee received and considered the report of the Collections Officer in relation the above.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, welcomed the Collections Officer, Ms Françoise Jackson, to the meeting.

The Collections Officer took Members through her report. She outlined the progress which had been made in relation to documentation and in particular the Town Council ownership project. This was a large project but significant progress had been made in relation to updating and rationalising the records. The Collections Officer also outlined progress which had been made in relation to the project to consolidate Abingdon's collections. It was noted that all of the 2010 decanted Abingdon collection stored at the Museum Resource Centre had now been audited, packed and made ready for transfer to Abingdon. 70% of the collection had already been transferred to the Abingdon store with the remainder scheduled for delivery by the end of September. The Collections Officer outlined the detailed work which she had undertaken in relation to collections care.

It was reported that the Collections Officer was continuing to respond to general collections enquiries. She was undertaking identification of objects, assisting with research enquiries and processing new items offered to the collections. In response to a question regarding the incorporation of the Barton Court finds into the County Council collection, the Officers reported that the County Council is the repository for archaeology found within Oxfordshire and incorporating this into the collections at the Museum Resource Centre made them more accessible for research purposes. In response to a question from a Member, the Collections Officer stated that there are regular enquiries to the Museum regarding objects, on average an enquiry every other day.

A Member asked whether there was an intention to reflect the collections in goods for sale in the shop. The Collections Officer stated that she was looking at ways to link the shop goods with exhibition items and stated that people often come into the Museum shop looking for unusual gifts.

A Member asked the Collections Officer whether she had all the necessary tools and equipment that she required in order to undertake her work. The Collections Officer stated that she had and that she was looking to procure such additional items as she would need in the future. At this point the Curator stated that there was an issue in relation to the computer server and the adequacy of the link between the County Hall and the Council's server at the Old Abbey House. Although the technicalities were not clear, it was understood that investigations by the Council's computer support company showed that the link was not performing well. Members agreed that the Curator should request Agile, the Council's IT support company, for a costed proposal in order to improve matters and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to commission this work provided that it could be accommodated within the appropriate budget.

The Collections Officer's report outlined progress in relation to supporting volunteers and her assistance in relation to the Council's Museum exhibitions.

Her report also outlined her involvement in Museum events and a wide variety of other activities within the Museum.

In relation to a proposal that the Museum joins with other local Museums in commissioning a shop bag, Members considered that in principle this was a good idea, as long as it worked out to be cost effective for the Museum. Clearly the Museum's logo would need to be on the bag and Members felt that the bag needed to look interesting. This matter would be taken forward by the Facilities Assistant.

The Committee thanked the Collections Officer for her comprehensive report and the work which she had undertaken and it was **resolved** that the report be approved.

M21 Facilities

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Assistant in relation to the above.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, welcomed the Facilities Assistant, Mr Matthew Stevens, to the meeting.

The report covered a number of areas. In relation to the Museum shop, it was reported that the variety of goods in the shop had been increased with an emphasis on quality stock relating to local and exhibition related items. Members were pleased to note that during the second quarter of the year the conversion rate of visitors purchasing items had increased by almost 80% on the first quarter and that the last week of August had shown the highest income in relation to shop and roof income since the Museum had reopened.

A Member stated that whilst he welcomed the linkage between shop items and the Museum and its exhibitions he was concerned that the shop was spreading too far into the Museum exhibition area and this made it look a little messy. The Facilities Assistant stated that in order to improve the shop it was necessary to purchase additional shelving for the shop and this had already been approved with a view to increasing income.

A Member asked that the potential for the sale of clothing, specifically Museum T-Shirts, should be explored.

The Curator stated that there was a small selection of shop items which were now on sale on the attic floor.

A Member enquired, in relation to the Forward Plan, whether there would be another meeting would be held to discuss matters and he stated that he wished the subject of a lift to the Sessions Hall and the enclosure of the undercroft to be considered for inclusion within the Plan. The Curator reported that a draft of the Forward Plan would come to the next meeting of this Committee.

Comment [NW1]: I don't think Jane answered this one Julie; do you know if another meeting is planned?

In relation to Museum facilities it was reported, as expected, that gas and electricity consumption had reduced over the summer months.

Progress in relation to marketing was reported and a Member asked how the Museum was finding the new website / portal. The Facilities Assistant stated that the new website looked much better than the previous website, was easy to use and worked well. In terms of operating the website, it was still at times necessary to obtain support as its operation was new.

Members were pleased to note that a strong team of volunteers supporting the Museum had been built up and that they were assisting with roof supervision, gallery supervision and marketing. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, stated that she had recently assisted in relation to the roof and recommended it to other Members.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the Facilities Assistant for his report and all his hard work in relation to Museum matters and it was **resolved** that the report be approved.

M22 **Abingdon Museum Friends**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Museum Friends, as circulated with the agenda. In relation to the report, it was noted that the next Fish and Chip Supper Quiz has been arranged for Saturday 5th October and that tickets were selling very quickly for this event.

Mr Clare stated that the Friends had been assisting with supervision of roof visits and a suggestion had come forward that the Museum should consider a season ticket for the roof.

Mr Clare noted that work was continuing on the Forward Plan and asked if the Museum Friends could be represented on any group considering this.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer, thanked the Friends for all their hard work, particularly in relation to the fundraising for the Museum and it was **resolved** that their report be approved.

M23 **Dates of meetings for 2013/14**

The Committee noted that the dates for future Committee meetings were noted as follows:

Tuesday 19th November 2013;
Tuesday 25th February 2014.

M24 **Exclusion of the Press and the Public**

The Chairman moved and it was **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.”

M25 **Confidential appendix to minutes**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the County Hall Museum Management Committee meeting of 14th May 2013, as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved: that the Committee approve the confidential appendix to the minutes of the above meeting as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

M26 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

M27 **County Hall Museum Improvement and Access Project**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Resolved: that the report be approved.

Further details, together with recommendations, are contained within the confidential appendix.

M28 **Staffing Matters**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Deputy Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Resolved: that the confidential report of the Deputy Town Clerk be approved.

The meeting rose at 9.30 pm.

Appendix 1: **Abingdon County Hall Museum - Proposed plan for future temporary exhibitions 2013 – 2016 v 3**

Date	Sessions Gallery	Attic Gallery	Events
July – August 2013	Janet Boulton – artist Garden Retrospective Allotments to Italy Closes 1 st September	Follow the Thread Oxford Textiles Ticia Lever Opens 23 July	Textile workshops
September – October 2013	Patching the Past Quilting Exhibition Opens 10 th September	Follow the Thread Oxford Textiles Works Closes 3 November	Adult Workshops on quilting
November - December 2013	Patching the Past Quilting Exhibition Closes 21 st December	<i>Installation of new cases 11 Nov 2013</i> Nuneham Courtenay design blue & white pottery Open end Nov 2013	Adult Workshops on quilting Half term patchwork pumpkins family activity Lecture by John Holmwood?
Jan - Feb 2014	Diamond Light Source exhibition Opens 14 th Jan 2014	Nuneham Courtenay design blue & white pottery Ends 2 March 2014	David Hudson lecture Astronomy night Feb – crystal growing Easter light workshops
March – April 2014	Diamond Light Source Closes 27 th April	90 years of the MG marque Opens 18 March	Prof James Foadi talk Linked to ATOM festival Easter 18 – 21 April
May - June 2014	David Buckland High Dynamic Range photos of Abingdon Opens 2 May	90 years of the MG marque Closes 20 July	
July - August 2014	David Buckland High Dynamic Range photos of Abingdon Closes 7 September	Abingdon in WW1 Opens 11pm on 4 th August 2014. Exactly 100 years after the outbreak of war?	
Sept – Nov 2014	60 years of Abingdon Fire Station Opens 16 September Closes mid Nov	Abingdon in WW1	
Nov - 2014 Feb 2015	Anglo Saxon Art? Or another from OCC Opens mid Nov 2014- Close early March 2015	Abingdon in WW1	

March – June 2015	Trendles 2 project Archaeology Opens mid March 2015 Closes end June 2015	Abingdon in WW1 Closes end 31May 2015	Science Festival linked to Archaeology topics? Easter 3 – 6 April
June – August	Haptic Art Opens mid July 2015	Abingdon 150 years ago: a time of change Albert Park, Catholic Church & Convent School, Abingdon School, Baptist Church Opens mid June 2015	Possible event 1682 – 2015 333 years of the County Hall
Sept - Nov	Haptic Art Closes mid Nov 2015	Abingdon 150 years ago: a time of change	
Dec 2015 – Jan 2016	WW1 posters linked to the introduction of Conscription in January 1916	Abingdon's famous visitors Royalty, Pepys, Ruskin, Turner, Constable, Spies, Convicts, Assassins	
Feb - April 2016	WW1 posters	Abingdon's famous visitors Royalty, Pepys, Ruskin, Turner, Constable, Spies, Convicts, Assassins	Easter 25 – 28 March
May - Sept 2016			
Sept - Dec 2016	Life and times of Sir John Mason? (460 years since Town Charter) Linked to Charter Day		
2017	1917 – Bronco Bill's Wild West came to Abingdon		
Other ideas	Medieval Abingdon and the Abbey	In the reigns of Edward II and Edward III	
		A history of Abingdon in 100 objects	
	Oxfordshire Butterflies	Richard Lewington Appleford Painted 10 Butterflies for the issue of stamps	