

# ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

|               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Report to     | Community Committee |
| Meeting date  | 28 November 2023    |
| Report author | Dan Sancisi         |
| Agenda item   | 7                   |

## Report of Museum Manager

### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members about the current activities and events at the Abingdon County Hall Museum. (no decision required, report to be noted)

### 2. Summary

- 2.1 Updates on the current exhibition, events, key indicators and Abingdon Museum Friends.

### 3. Action required

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the report.

### 4. Link to strategic plan and objectives

#### 4.1 ***KO2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.***

4.1.1 The Museum's presence in Abingdon County Hall sustains the condition of the building, maintaining it for future generations, enhancing its town centre context by articulating the history of Abingdon.

4.1.2 Facilitating a climate emergency centre in the café promotes public engagement with sustainability and develops skills and knowledge about reuse, repair and recycling.

#### 4.2 ***KO4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.***

4.2.1 Working with One Planet Abingdon creates an opportunity for diverse communities to access free events and support, also to engage with the Museum.

**5 Background**

- 5.1 The Museum continues to operate its temporary exhibition programme, educational workshops and events.
- 5.2 One Planet Abingdon has developed its schedule of events and activities and is firmly established as the Climate Emergency Centre of Abingdon.

**6 Key information and options**

**6.1 Visitors**

- 6.2 The Museum attracted 13,116 visitors from 1 April 2023 to 22 November 2023, at the same point during year 2022 to 2023 we had received 11,551 visitors, thus equating to a 14% increase in numbers.

**6.3 Exhibitions**

- 6.4 The current exhibition “Comic Recollections, from the pen of Geoff Dunbar.” has been received well, enjoying many complimentary posts on social media and comments from visitors.

- 6.5 The third artist short exhibitions series ran through the month of October showing broad interest from visitors and enjoying a TV news article on That’s TV Oxfordshire.

**6.6 Events**

- 6.7 The October children’s half term workshop proved popular as ever, this time with the theme ‘Celebrate Autumn’. 75 parents and children attended the event during the day.

- 6.8 The next instalment of Gareth Howell’s talks on World War Two took place at the Amey Theatre in Abingdon on 10 November 2023. Titled ‘1943: The Reich in Retreat’ it took £320 at the box office and was very well received by those attending.

- 6.9 As is our custom it premiered on our YouTube channel on 21 November 2023 and received 181 views in the first few hours. His previous talks have received over 35 thousand views to date.

**6.10 Education**

- 6.11 The Museum Educator Jennifer Doran has hosted a busy start to the new school year with at least one school group per week in November and booking are flowing in for the new year.

- 6.12 She has developed a new workshop centring on Abingdon in World War 2 employing inventive ‘live’ situation re-enactments of the ‘watch-out’ on the County Hall roof, whereby Children can view the horizon through binoculars in the cupola while ‘placement’ volunteer adults rush around the Market Place retracing the WW2 town emergency plan of the war years.

Agenda item 7

- 6.13** A typical email from a school visit reads – ‘Thank you so much for accommodating us yesterday. The children had a fantastic time and loved learning about Abingdon in WW2. The staff learned lots too! Jennifer was brilliant and the organisation of the whole session was excellent. Some of our other classes have booked to come to various workshops and I am sure will thoroughly enjoy them.’
- 6.14** **Key performance indicators of the Museum from 1 April 2023 to 20 August 2023.**
- 6.15** Shop sales totalled £5,559.91 equating to £0.42 per visitor. (Includes talks and events and commission sales)
- 6.16** Donations received are £3,997.67 averaging at £0.31 per visitor.
- 6.17** Roof takings of £4,045.83 have a visitor average spend of £0.31.
- 6.18** **Abingdon Museum Friends (AMF)**
- 6.19** At Community Committee meeting of 5 September 2023 members were interested in the technical assistance given by AMF personnel who were able to recommission the interactive archaeology map thereby saving the Museum up to £11,000 by buying new hardware and software.
- 6.20** Members requested further information about this. The initial problem began when the old touch screen became faulty and was replaced by the original IT engineers.
- 6.21** The new screen would not work with the 2014 software, as such the engineer referred the Museum to the original software designers who quoted for new hardware and software at approximately £11,000.
- 6.22** The Museum Manager regarded this as an extraordinary cost and began researching alternatives.
- 6.23** Your officers are pleased to report that an individual from AMF identified the outdated operating system as the issue, then by installing a newer (free) version, allowing updated drivers to be installed that functioned with the new touch screen.

**7** **Climate change/green implications**

- 7.1** No additional climate change / green implications to report.

**8** **Financial/budget implications**

- 8.1** There are no additional financial implications regarding the current budget.

**9** **HR implications**

- 9.1** There are no current HR implications.

**10**     **Appendices**

**10.1**    Minutes of the Abingdon Museum Friends AGM 2023.

**Dan Sancisi, Museum Manager, 22 November 2023**