

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Stuart Bartholomew – Chairman
Cllr L Williams – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr L Northover, Ms F Winrow and Mr A Frost

Also in
attendance: Sir George Meyrick (Baronet) - virtually

13. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Andy Martin.

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

15. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of previous meeting were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair stated that since the election of chair of the meeting his term as chair was extended beyond the usual 2 terms due to externalisation that was not completed at that point which enabled continuity until vesting day.

16. Public Issues

There were no public issues.

17. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Update Report (1 April – 30 September 2025)

The Museum Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Museum had another successful 6 month period (1 April – 30 September 2025) income was up 5% and expenditure was also up. After a slow start to the season, the summer was extremely busy due to the popularity of the Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Award exhibition throughout the house and the 'May Morris: Art and Advocacy' exhibition in the main

galleries. The café benefited from the good weather attracting visitors to the terrace and garden.

The museum was concerned about fires on the cliffs and bush fires on the cliff paths. There was water coming through the roof to various areas and caused damage, there was a MEND 4 project which would provide money for repairs.

Funding was received from Bournemouth Civic Society for the children's pavilion and additional funding was being sought for this also.

The Museum's accreditation review was completed by the Arts Council England and been awarded full accreditation.

The programme of events was varied at the museum. Museum Manager arranged a date to meet with the organiser of a celebration of culture exhibition to arrange a date for October 26.

RESOLVED that

The Management Committee accepts the Error! Unknown document property name. for the period 1 April – 30 September 2025.

Voting: Unanimous

18. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Report

The Museum Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

There were a collection of paintings that were poor quality that the museum wanted to dispose of. It was suggested that they could be offered to anyone who wanted them or could be auctioned off. It was suggested that they were offered to a care home or sold in the cafe instead of just being thrown away. Museum manager would consider the suggestion before disposal.

RESOLVED that

The Management Committee notes and approves

- a) acquisitions
- b) loans
- c) disposals

As outlined in the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Report

Voting: Unanimous

19. Report on the progress of the 'Repair and Renewal 2' Project funded by Arts Council England (ACE) Museum Estates and Development (MEND) Fund Round 4

The Museum Manager presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Public Report

The Russell-Cotes had received £1,500,817 from ACE MEND 4, which together with £359,317 of match funding from CIL and legacies provided a total project grant of £1,860,134 to fund major urgent repairs to the Russell-Cotes building, services and interiors.

Payment conditions had been met to enable the first instalment to be paid. Conservation architects, Purcell were appointed after an open tender and design work was underway.

The project was due for completion by November 2027.

The first major work to be done was new CCTV, that was out to tender and the work due to start early 2026.

The major work on the façade was due to commence Spring/Summer 26 and the building would be covered in scaffolding for 6 – 8 months.

The Chair informed the committee that the architect appointed for the work by BCP were very professional and things were working well. The chair was impressed with the representative from Purcell and their understanding of the museums needs. There were challenges with listed building consent but those were resolved.

RESOLVED that

The Management Committee accepts the report

Voting: Unanimous

20. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery& Museum Update on Progress to Independence

The Director of Customer and Property presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'D' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

This item was taken first at the Chair's discretion.

The Charity Commission and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have agreed to the Russell-Cotes charity giving Public Notice of the Scheme in the next step of the governance change. DCMS and Charity Commission have indicated that they are working towards a vesting day of 1 April 2026 but it was subject to parliamentary time.

Other work was being progressed such as arrangements for the transfer of assets, TUPe of staff etc with the new corporate trustee, RCAGM Sole Trustee Ltd.

BCP Council presumed a 1 October 2025 deadline for externalisation which has now been exceeded. Consequently, there was no revenue budget for the museum beyond 30 September 2025 and the council proposed that the lump sum of £2.25million agreed for the new entity to give it time to become financially sustainable, be used from 1 October to fund the Museum's revenue costs from this point whilst still within the Council.

However, the report outlining the financial deal, which was agreed by Cabinet on 7 February 2024 and by full Council on 20 February 2024

recognised that Vesting Day might be on 1 October 2025 but could take as long as 1 April 2026.

The Board of RCAGM Sole Trustee has expressed its concern at the council's position that funding should cease and requested a meeting with the Chief Executive to discuss the serious implications of this on the future viability of the externalised museum. It was stated that when the agreement was made it was done so in good faith and the Council position had changed.

The future of the museum being a separate was in doubt with the funding issue as money was needed to complete the externalisation.

RESOLVED that

The Management Committee

a) note the progress on the Scheme and Order of State support the request for an urgent meeting for the Chair with the Chief Executive to ensure that the financial agreement made by Council in February 2024 is honoured to ensure the viability and financial sustainability of the Russell-Cotes in the future

The committee added:

It is the collective view of the Management Committee the proposed setting of the RCMAG vestiture budget against the agreed financial settlement was an obligation of the agreement with BCP and was rejected.

Voting: Unanimous

21. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was, confirmed as Monday 19 January 2026 at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 2.41 pm

CHAIRMAN