

RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 4TH MAY, 2022

Present: Stuart Bartholomew in the Chair

Councillors Cllr B Dunlop and Cllr M Iyengar
Sir G Meyrick

18 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Williams and Mr Frost.

19 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

20 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 October 2021 and 12 January 2022 were agreed as true and correct records.

Voting: unanimous

21 Public Issues

There were no public issues on this occasion.

22 Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Update 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 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

This report provided the Committee with an update on the activities of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum from October 2021 – March 2022 including the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Committee commended the Team's work around the difficulties which arose during the Covid Pandemic.

It was noted that just one wedding was listed and asked if there was an ambition to host more. It was advised that the wedding booking had been taken during the pandemic. The Team did not wish to continue with weddings but would consider individual approaches. The building was a challenging environment for a wedding. It was agreed that other ventures may be more beneficial to pursue.

In response to a question about what merchandise sells best, it was advised that the guidebook was number one seller, then the current exhibition book, "Lost Words" number two and prints thirdly.

RESOLVED that the Management Committee accepted the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum review report for the period 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022 and agreed the actions suggested in the report

Voting: Unanimous

23 **Recommendation for an Extension to the Term of Office of the Chair of the Management Committee**

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.

The Management Committee were asked to consider to recommend to Cabinet that the Chair of the Management Committee be given a further term of office to provide vital continuity at an exceptional time for the Russell-Cotes both externally and internally.

It was unanimously agreed that a report requesting the that the Chair of the Management Committee be given a further term of office, be presented at the September meeting of Cabinet, at the latest.

RESOLVED that the Management Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Chair of the Management Committee be given a further term of office to provide vital continuity at an exceptional time for the Russell-Cotes both externally and internally.

Voting: Unanimous

24 **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 'C' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee were asked to note the new acquisitions to the Collection (the material owned and held in trust by the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum charity in accordance with its charitable objectives) and the loan of material to other institutions (i.e. public art galleries and museums and to approve the disposal of items in the collection according to the Museums Association Code of Ethics.

It was acknowledged that there were no disposals. Loans – the Museum and Art Gallery would be loaning a lacquer sample set, which demonstrated the process, to the Rijksmuseum in a few months.

RESOLVED that the Management Committee noted:

(a) The acquisitions;

(b) The loans; and

(c) The disposals

as outlined in the Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Report.

Voting: Unanimous

25 **Update on 'Repair and Renewal' Project funded by ACE MEND etc for restoration of Conservatory etc**

The Museum Manager 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.

The Committee was asked to note the successful application for funding and the progress in the delivery of the 'Repair and Renewal Project', and agree to review the Museum's charges to meet the funding and ongoing maintenance needs.

In response to questioning about the financial arrangement with the Council, it was explained that the Council had agreed to match fund £426K. £213K would be loaned, with the repayments being an additional burden to the budget, a paper detailing this would be presented at the next meeting. The interest on the loan was £15K per year, fixed at 3%, for the next 20 years. The allocation of £213k from CIL, was a gift and did not need to be repaid

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In response to a question about the outstanding finances, it was advised that the building works had been estimated and would require substantial financial support. How to attract funding was an ongoing matter.

It was agreed that Maintenance Needs be added to the work programme as a standing item.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **the Committee noted the successful application for funding and the progress in the delivery of the 'Repair and Renewal Project'; and**
- b) **The Committee agreed to review the Museum's charges to meet the funding and ongoing maintenance needs.**

Voting: Unanimous

26 Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Management Committee Work Programme

The Democratic Services Officer presented a report, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'E' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Committee was asked to note and update the work programme as necessary.

It was agreed that key dates be included, for example financial issues; acquisitions, etc, at next meeting. Issues relating to the externalisation project would be detailed in a separate project plan.

RESOLVED that a work programme be included on all future agenda for the Committee.

Voting: unanimous

27 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs such interest in disclosing the information.

28 Update on Progress towards Externalization

Exempt Report as defined in Paragraph 3 in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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

The Management Committee was asked to note the progress made with Business Planning and Governance Discussions and to approve the continued progress of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum to externalization as a fully independent charity.

The Committee was advised that since this report had been written, contact with the Charity Commission had only resulted in a holding response so far. A meeting with the Monitoring Officer had gone well and was encouraging to finding a route through this.

It was explained that the next course of action was to take a report to Cabinet. The initial process had commenced with the Charity Commission, who want evidence externalisation was in the best interest of the charity.

In response to a question about levels of support needed to achieve the project, it was explained that it would depend on the Charity Commission feedback. The Monitoring Officer had confirmed the use of internal legal resources to support this.

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RESOLVED that:

- a) **The Management Committee noted the progress made with Business Planning and Governance Discussions; and**
- b) **The Management Committee approved the continued progress of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum to externalization as a fully independent charity**

Voting: Unanimous

Duration of the meeting: 2.00 - 3.45 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 4 May 2022