

RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 2023

Present: Stuart Bartholomew in the Chair

Councillors Cllr L Williams (Vice-Chairman) and Ms F Winrow

Apologies: Mr A Frost and Sir George Meyrick Baronet

37 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Alan Frost, Sir George Meyrick, Greg Irvine and Councillor Dunlop joined the meeting online.

38 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Williams declared an interest as a member of the Arts Council South West but took full-part in the meeting.

39 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2022 were agreed as a true and correct record.

Voting: unanimous

40 Financial Statements 2021/22

The Company Accountant 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.

It was a statutory requirement to agree the annual financial statements for the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum and submit them to the Charity Commission by 31 January each year. The Committee are asked to review and agree the financial statements and the Letter of Representation prior to them being signed off by the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation.

It was asked, as Covid restrictions had still been in place for part of the year 2021/22, could the end of year figures be speculated upon, had they not been. It was advised that much of the expenditure had been covered by the Arts Council grant – cultural recovery fund – so the figures were not as it appeared in the accounts, as some monies were carried forward from the previous year. It was explained that in accountancy, income was included in the year it is received, rather than when it was used. The income received was as following: 19/20: £514K; 21/22: £486k, excluding grant income. Expenditure: 19/20: £1073; and 21/22: £1111.

In response to a question about the success of the business following Covid, it was explained that in comparison with pre-covid visitor figures, at the beginning of May 2021, 75% of visitors but by the end of the year 90% and now 100%. The entrance prices have slightly increased also. The focus had been on attracting visitors since re-opening and meeting expectations. The recovery had been above and beyond what was expected.

The external Auditor Nick Hiscox was in attendance and advised that difficulties encountered during the audit included, the charity not having a separate bank account, but using the

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Council's, which underwrote the seeking of independent status. This had led to further audit work, to ensure the complete audit record. It was exceptional to have it done this way. There was also no separate VAT system. It was further advised that charities had different legislation for VAT purposes and HMRC are likely to recognise this also. In response to a question about valuations, it was explained that the big issue was the valuation of the building rather than the separate issues. The details referred to a building value based on an insurance valuation of the building, rather than a chartered surveyor's valuation. It was felt that much of what had been discussed underwrote the reason for recommending separation from the Council. It was advised that a proper valuation of the building would be advisable before the externalisation is completed, for the next accounts.

RESOLVED that the Committee agree the financial statements and the Letter of Representation for the financial year 2021/22.

Voting: Unanimous

41 Update on Progress on the Museum's Forward Plan (2020 - 2024)

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 Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Forward Plan (2020-2024) outlined the museum's strategic objectives as required by Arts Council England (ACE) Museum Accreditation.

This update gave Management Committee Members an understanding of the progress to date, against these objectives and the planned actions to come. The Museum had made good progress in some areas such as:

- driving investment to the conservation of the fabric of the building (MEND);
- conservation of items in the collection;
- improvements to the room displays and interpretation;
- development of popular programming and events; and
- more focussed marketing.

However, the review of governance has proven to be complex and challenging. The Update enables the Management Committee to review progress and make suggestions for future activities and actions.

The Committee acknowledged that the Council had agreed the process for externalisation of the Art Gallery and Museum and gave their thanks to the Councillors in support at the meeting of Full Council. Thanks was also given to the Museum Manager for the work she did in advance of the meeting of Full Council.

It was suggested that in addition to the short-term projection on the plan, there needed to be a long-term section, covering possibly two to four years ahead. This would advertise the Museum and would be useful when applying for grants and support. It was suggested that a forward planning workshop needed to be established and also, consideration be given to what bodies, such as Arts Council SW would want to be considered.

It was further suggested that a bulletin be produced, which would help to keep people up to date with progress.

RESOLVED that:

The Management Committee:

- a) noted the progress made against the strategic objectives identified in the Forward Plan;**
- b) reviewed the future activity planned; and**

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- c) recommended the following further actions and activities to be undertaken to achieve them:
- i. in addition to the short-term projection on the plan, there needed to be a long-term section, covering possibly two to four years ahead; and
 - ii. a bulletin be produced, which would help to keep people up to date with progress.

Voting: Unanimous

Duration of the meeting: 2.00 - 2.50 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 30 January 2023