

RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 30TH OCTOBER, 2023

Present: Stuart Bartholomew (Chair)

Cllr L Williams, Cllr A Martin, Cllr L Northover and
Mr A Frost

Apologies: Ms F Winrow

50 Election of Chairman of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Management Committee

RESOLVED: That Stuart Bartholomew be elected as Chairman for the 2023-24 municipal year.

51 Election of a Vice-Chairman of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Management Committee

RESOLVED: That Cllr Lawrence Williams be elected as Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2023-24.

52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ms F Winrow.

53 Declarations of Interest

None.

54 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting. It was highlighted that Alan Frost's attendance had been omitted and required correction.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

55 Public Issues

None.

56 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 provides an update on the activities of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum from 1 March – 30 September 2023.

The Management Committee was advised that the period had been exceptionally good for the museum, with a 14% increase in visitor numbers and associated income for the first 6 months of the financial year 2023/24.

The exhibition '*In her own voice: the art of Lucy Kemp-Welch*' has been a critical and commercial success and attracted national coverage. In addition, improvements to digital marketing, TV coverage and poor weather from July had resulted in a positive impact.

The café, events and membership had performed well with the only exception being the shop. Although profit margins remained good, the shop's turnover has decreased because of issues with stock purchases and the likely reluctance of patrons to spend on non-essentials during a time of financial hardship.

Significant concerns remained about the continued deterioration of the building and the detrimental impact this had on the irreplaceable and fragile Grade2* historic house, as well as its collections, operations and visitor experience. There was good news on funding, with Bournemouth Civic Society having offered their surplus to the museum, additional Arts Council funding and a bequeathment.

There were discussions and questions on the report.

The Thai exhibition was commended. There was a recent private view which the Thai Ambassador, his wife and a member of the Thai Royal family attended. It is expected that the exhibition will be popular.

There was a question about the fragility of the building and how much was needed for the building.

It was reported that last year that BCP spent £9,600 on compliance CCTV, fire alarms and lifts.

It was stated that Russell-Cotes is feeling the effects of global warming, rain is good for numbers but not the building due to its fragility.

On page 11 item 7 of the report shows the quite serious fragile state of the building some of which will take a great deal of resource to remedy.

It was asked if there is a register of collection items in place.

It was confirmed there is a register of items in the collection, and everything is inventoried, there are 2 audits per year.

The Museum Manager reported that she will draw up a policy on Audit, and on Loss and Damage which will be brought to the Committee for approval to provide additional clarity.

RESOLVED that the Management Committee accepts the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum review report for the period 1 March – 30 September 2023.

Voting: Unanimous

57 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.

The report was detailed and the Committee was asked to note the new acquisitions to the Collection (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 which do not meet the Museum's Core Offer in accordance with the Museums Association Code of Ethics.

The Committee was advised that the museum has a large collection of items and are not seeking to acquire significant more material, rather very specific items relating to the Russell-Cotes family and their collections.

The Buddha shrine was noted as being on loan to the British Museum.

It was reported that there were no items currently in need of disposal for the committee to consider.

It was reported that 'Venus Verticordia' had been returned and was safely back on the wall in the main hall.

RESOLVED that the acquisitions and loans, as detailed in Appendix 1 (Acquisitions, Loans and Disposals Report) to this report, be noted.

Voting: Unanimous

58 Update on 'Repair and Renewal' Project funded by ACE MEND for restoration of Conservatory and environmental plant

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 was advised that the Arts Council England (ACE) Museums Estates Development (MEND) funded project (£974,000) to support the backlog of maintenance issues at the Russell-Cotes was progressing as follows:

- Replacement of environmental plant and machinery had been completed or commissioned.
 - Phase 1 of the replacement of all mechanical plant for the boilers and air handling units in the historic house had been completed and commissioned. Temporary air handling had been supplied to the Galleries to maintain environmental conditions for GIS.
 - Phase 2 replacing of the Air Handling units for the Galleries started on 16 October 2023.
 - Phase 3 replacement of the plant in the Modern Wing would start in January 2024 and would require the closure of the Museum for 4 weeks.
- The tenders for the restoration of the Conservatory were under consideration. However, the tenders were significantly higher (£100,000) than budgeted for and the project could not continue without reallocation of budget.
- Drainage work on the party drains had been carried out in the Royal Bath Hotel by Wessex Water and had been successful so far.
- CCTV work had yet to be commissioned.

The work was being carried out in phases so that the museum could stay open. Phase 1 was confirmed to be completed,

Phase 2 was ongoing and on schedule.

For phase 3, the museum would close for 4 weeks for work to be completed.

Regarding the Conservatory, staff were working with surveyors and architects for designs.

The Museum Manager asked the committee for support to rework the budget, as the drainage work was largely sorted and not do CCTV.

RESOLVED that :

- 1. The Management Committee agrees to pause further work on drainage and CCTV in order to focus all available funds on the restoration of the conservatory, which is the priority, given its condition and importance and to ensure the retention of the ACE MEND funding;**
- 2. The Management Committee agrees to increase the project funding to £1,015,000 by utilizing £41,000 of additional funding from an insurance claim, fundraising and reserves.**

Voting: Unanimous

59 Update on Progress towards the Russell-Cotes becoming a fully Independent Trust

The Chairman 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.

It was reported that moving the Russell-Cotes to become a fully Independent Trust had been an issue for the last 5 years as it was a non incorporated charity in which trustees were conflicted in the role of trustees and elected members.

It was noted that this was not a problem unique to Russell-Cotes and was experienced by a number of local authorities who were administering historic charities, many of which have moved to independent charity status.

The case for becoming fully independent had been widely acknowledged and supported by the committee. The case for independence had also secured the approval of the Charity Commission.

Support from key agencies was also in place to progress the change under the rules set out in section 73 of the Charities Act 2011. The National Lottery Heritage Fund had supported this process with a grant of £100,000 to cover legal costs.

The laying of a parliamentary order would take between 6 – 12 months.

Urgency was an issue as the Russell-Cotes sought to avoid delays due to a parliamentary election likely to take place part way through the process.

There are a number of risks identified in the report to be noted by the authority to avoid reputational damage.

The financial settlement required resolution within this calendar year.

RESOLVED: that the Management Committee supports the continuation of the project to replace BCP Council as the sole trustee with a new corporate trustee as agreed by the Council at their meeting on 10th January 2023 with a target date of 1st April 2025 and requests:

- 1. That every effort is applied in getting a financial settlement for the corporate trust;**

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- 2. That Senior officer time is devoted to this outcome;**
- 3. That Senior officers communicate their commitment to deliver the project within the timeframe announced.**

Voting : Unanimous

60 Date of Next Meeting - 11 January 2024

The date of the next meeting was confirmed to be Thursday 11 January 2024.

Chairman at the meeting on
Monday, 30 October 2023