

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

Minutes of the Meeting held on 02 June 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present:-

Stuart Bartholomew – Chairman

Cllr L Williams – Vice-Chairman

Present: Cllr A Martin, Cllr L Northover and Ms F Winrow
Sir George Meyrick Baronet - Virtually

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Alan Frost.

2. Election of Chair

Nominations were sought for the election of Chair. A nomination was received and seconded for Stuart Bartholomew. No further nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Stuart Bartholomew be elected as Chair of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Management Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

3. Election of Vice-Chair

Nominations were sought for the election of Vice Chair. A nomination was received and seconded for Councillor L Williams. No further nominations were received.

RESOLVED that Councillor L Williams be elected as Vice Chair of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Management Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29 January 2025 were approved as a correct record.

6. Public Issues

The Committee was advised that there had been no public questions or statements received on this occasion.

7. Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Update Report (1 October 2024 – 31 March 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 dry weather had reduced maintenance issues with less leaks, however, the recent cliff fires had put the museum at some risk as it was close to the cliff top.

This winter 6-month period had seen the highest visitor numbers (23,283) since an admission charge was introduced in 2017, reflecting the popularity of the 'Artists in Purbeck' exhibition. It had generated increased income in admissions, Gift Aid, cafe and shop.

The 'May Morris' exhibition (textiles and embroidery) launched in April 2025 was well presented and the 'Artist as Witness' exhibition was scheduled for October, with a funded catalogue.

The Museum submitted their latest Accreditation return to the Arts Council England. This sets standards for governance, collections care and user experience and was a requirement for important museum activity such as inter-museum loans and grants. The result would be heard in August 2025.

The Russell-Cotes had considerable success with grant applications including:

- £1,500,817 for building repairs from ACE MEND Round 4 subject to BCP Council approval;
- £30,000 from Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art for a research curator into the tempera revival at the Russell-Cotes;
- £8,000 acquisition grant for prints from the Hallett Prize;
- The museum had also received small awards for bicycle racks and £3000 for sculpture refurbishment.

RESOLVED that The Management Committee accepts the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum Update report for the period 1 October 2024 – 31 March 2025

Voting: Unanimous

8. 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.

It had a markedly positive period of donations to the museum, partly prompted by the Purbeck show which had inspired a number of donations including from neighbours of the artists in the exhibition.

Two paintings by Lucy Kemp-Welsh were donated to the collection and about six prints and watercolours by well-known local artist Lesley Moffat-Ward.

The Hallett Prize fund was used to purchase prints from the London Original Print Fair which included a print by Eric Ravilious.

A Pre-Raphaelite influenced folding screen by Fred Appleyard had been donated by Philippa Chappell.

An exceptional request had been made to return the framed oil painting entitled 'Lighthouse Fields, Purbeck' by Pádraig Mac Miadhacháin (1929-2017), to the donor, the artist's widow Jane along with associated sketches.

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

9. Report on the Conclusion of the 'Repair and Renewal' Project funded by Arts Council England (ACE), Museum Estates and Development (MEND) fund Round 1 for the restoration of the conservatory and replacement of services

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 Management Committee were informed that MEND 1 had been successfully completed with some small scale work continuing such as adding anti shatter film to the glazing in the conservatory.

The plant had been replaced which gave reliable heating and demonstrated a 10% reduction in the use of energy.

It was reported that the conservatory looked stunning and visitors were enjoying the space. The museum was looking at options to use the space for events, afternoon teas etc to generate income. The total project would be for £1.9 million. Unfortunately, the repair and reconnection of the fountain in the Main Hall was rejected from the funding on the basis was not urgent.

RESOLVED that The Management Committee reviewed the report and approved the conclusion of the project.

Voting: Unanimous

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

The Chairman 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 Scheme which agrees the future governance framework for the new Corporate Trustee of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum had been approved by the Charity Commission and BCP Council under delegated powers. It had been passed to the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), together with the Draft Order of State for the publicity and modification phase. This would be reviewed by the Secretary of State for either sign off or laid before Parliament. This was not likely to happen until the autumn, because of the summer recess which could delay vesting day until 2026.

RCAGM Sole Trustee Ltd, the new Company Limited by Guarantee, was formed and shadow meetings have taken place.

It had been agreed that reserves could be transferred to the new Trustee's account so that it could establish contracts for HR and legal advice to progress necessary activities including staff transfer in advance of Vesting Day.

ICT had been helpful and assisted in screening and assessing potential suppliers of new equipment and ongoing support contracts.

The actuarial assessment for the pension scheme was still awaited and help was sought to expedite this if possible.

RESOLVED that The Management Committee notes progress on moving to an independent trust requests officer support to progress:

- a) The transfer of £100,000 of reserves and grant funding to the new Sole Trustee**
 - b) The delivery of the pension actuarial assessment**
 - c) Development of legal agreements**
 - d) ICT Service transfer**
- and delegates authority for progressing and agreeing terms to Service Director for Customer and Property, Chief Operations Officer and Monitoring Officer.**

Voting: Unanimous

11. Extension to the term of office of the Chair of the Russell-Cotes Management Committee

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.

The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum was going through a highly complex governance change which was started in 2018 and would require an Order of State through Parliament to complete.

Through the prolonged and complex process, Professor Stuart Bartholomew had been the Chair of the Management Committee, to which Cabinet delegate the responsibility for oversight of the charity.

Professor Bartholomew was appointed in 2017 and served for the maximum two terms. In 2022, Cabinet agreed exceptionally to appoint him for a further 3 year term on the basis that the governance change had reached a critical juncture, which was impacted by Covid and heightened by coinciding with the Museum's Centenary.

That further term was due to end in September 2025 and while it had been anticipated that externalisation would be complete on 1 October 2025, there was a strong likelihood that Vesting Day may not be achieved until 1 January 2026 or even 1 April 2026 and therefore the Committee would need to keep functioning in the meantime.

A further limited extension was advised rather than lose Professor Bartholomew's experience and commitment to this complex project and potentially putting it at risk at this critical moment.

RESOLVED that that the Russell-Cotes Management Committee recommend to Cabinet that the Chair of the Management Committee's term of office be extended until the transfer of the Museum to the new sole trustee is completed or for a further 3 years (whichever is soonest) to provide vital continuity at the pivotal moment in the process of externalisation.

It is noted that as soon as Vesting Day is achieved the Management Committee would cease to exist and the appointment will be concluded.

It is noted that this decision would not set any precedent for this or any other BCP Council Committee.

Voting: Unanimous

12. Date of next meeting

Monday 17 October 2025.

RUSSELL COTES ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE
02 June 2025

The meeting ended at 2.41 pm

CHAIRMAN