

MINUTES OF THE PENLEE HOUSE AND PARK COMMITTEE MEETING held in Committee Room No. 3, St. John's Hall, Penzance on Tuesday 19 May 2009 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillors J F Moreland (Chairman)
M Lovegrove (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors M R Cotton
J H Dixon (from 8.20 p.m.)
M Freeman
R M Lawrence
C A C White

ALSO PRESENT

Alison Bevan (Director, Penlee House Gallery & Museum)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Councillors R A Mann, D Nebesnuick, J Parkin, J Ruhmund

Absent without apologies: Councillors K L W Perry, T E Williams

2. **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2009**

Having been circulated, it was

RESOLVED: that they should be signed as a true and correct record.

4. **REPORT OF DIRECTOR**

(a) **Exhibition, income and visitor number report**

The Director reported that, whilst visitor numbers were excellent, takings reflected the lack of a book to accompany the current exhibition and the effects of the 'credit crunch'. Visitor figures for the calendar year stood at 13,805 at the close of the day against 14,180 at the end of May 2008. However, for the financial year 2008/09 visitor figures exceeded 39,000 (39,040) for the first time ever and it was hoped that this figure could be surpassed in the current financial year.

The shop had been experiencing problems with the credit card machine so the actual figure for the close of day was estimated to be £13,318.71 against £18,707.83 at the end of May 2008, showing a definite decline in income. Total takings stood at £19,813.71 at the end of day, measured against £26,963.93 at the end of May 2008 (which was one of the highest figures on record). However, the average daily take was currently £460 as opposed to £480 last May and the Director was confident that figures would still be good for this year.

The joint ticketing scheme had not had an obvious impact on visitor numbers or takings, either positively or negatively.

(b) Forthcoming exhibitions

The leaflet for the year 2009-10 had already been distributed and the Director announced that the next exhibition, starting on 20 June, would be "The Brotherhood of the Palette: Newlyn School paintings 1880-1900".

(c) Social History Gallery

The Director reported that a 'Your Heritage' grant of just under £50,000 had been awarded to Penlee House towards the cost of a complete refurbishment of the Social History Gallery which should be opened on 4 December 2009. An upgrade of the website was included in the refurbishment and this would, hopefully include the complete collections database.

Members were informed that an open day would be held in the Newlyn Centre on 22 August when artistic professionals would be on hand to talk about a variety of objects and provide information on the background, history etc.

It was

RESOLVED: that the Director should be congratulated on obtaining the 'Your Heritage' grant.

(d) Acquisitions

Penlee House had made a few acquisitions recently including the collection of Walter Langley's granddaughter that she had bequeathed to a friend who, in turn, had donated the collection to Penlee House in her memory. Some items that were not suitable for the Gallery's collection would be sold and the money donated to Penlee House.

A donation was a bust of Barbara Tribe that had been offered and gratefully accepted from the estate of Barbara Tribe and two further small acquisitions had been purchased by the Friends of Penlee House.

(e) Education Room / Playgroup Centre

Members were reminded that two organisations had been interested in taking over the lease of the Playgroup building but, subsequently, the Director had expressed an interest in using the building as an Education Centre as it now seemed unlikely that sufficient funding would be forthcoming to fund the construction of the proposed 'Eco building'.

A preliminary quote for the refurbishment of the building had been received and further quotes would be obtained for a comparison and the Director was investigating avenues of grant funding.

It was reported that the financial implication would be the loss of rent from an outside body but this would be offset in part by the extra income that would result from the increase in groups being able to access the services of the House and it was

RESOLVED: that the Committee would support the Director's request and the matter would be taken forward to the Finance/Property Committee meeting on 21 May 2009.

(f) Change to Friends of Penlee Constitution

The Director informed members that the current Friends of Penlee constitution precluded the Friends assisting with repairs to the building and furnishings etc. and also one-off capital projects or accepting bequests on behalf of the gallery and museum. Therefore a change to the constitution would go to the next AGM that would allow the Friends to consider assisting with capital projects but not with routine maintenance work.

(g) Environmental audit

A report of the recent environmental audit had been received but there were very few recommendations that would make a significant impact on the energy efficiency of Penlee House but it had been a useful exercise that had been funded by central government. It was noted that the floodlights outside the museum had recently been removed, resulting in a drop in the electricity bill at no loss to the overall aspect of the building in the evening

(h) Conservation of paintings

The Director reminded members that a painting by John Opie "Old Kneebone of Helston", purchased in 2008, had been in a poor state of repair and was currently undergoing extensive conservation work at a cost of approximately £1,900 to £2,300 (including re-lining that would take place in London).

A further acquisition – "Penzance Harbour" by Brian Pearce, had some damage caused by damp and the first quote received for the repair work had been prohibitive (£2,385). The Committee therefore

RECOMMENDED: that the Director should be supported in her approach to the Friends of Penlee House for financial assistance with the conservation of this painting and that a second quote should be sourced.

5. REPORT OF TOWN CLERK

(a) Replacement of awnings at the Orangery Café

The Town Clerk reported that the new, single, electric awning had been installed and this awning provided shelter from the rain as well as from sunshine. Of the three awnings that had been removed, one was broken completely and the other two very in a poor condition.

(b) New seating area

The new seating area for the café was almost complete with the wooden tables and benches providing much needed extra seating space for visitors. The herb garden would be planted with herbs for use by the café and these would be replaced at regular intervals by seedlings being grown by the gardeners in the greenhouse.

(c) Flooring in Orangery Café kitchen

The flooring in the kitchen of the café required replacement following a recent health and safety visit and two quotes for the work had been received with the contract being awarded to a locally-based company. The work would take place on Sunday 14 June, with a further contractor being employed to remove and replace all the equipment, and it should be completed in one day.

(d) New machinery in park

The Town Clerk reported that all the new machinery for the park had now arrived along with new personal protective clothing for all the gardening staff. It was hoped that some of the old, unused machinery could be sold off.

(e) Potential new 'lean-to' for diesel tank storage

The lean-to that currently housed the diesel store was a very shaky, 'made do' construction of reclaimed timber and chicken wire that was a prime target for vandals and from which, on occasion, the diesel had been siphoned off. It was proposed that a sturdier structure could be built in-house (diagrams and costings had been provided by Vaughan Glover, the maintenance man) that would also provide space with sufficient air circulation for the safe use of paint, stripper and other solvents and it was

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk's proposal for a new structure in line with the specifications provided should be approved.

Although the following item had not been included on the agenda, due to the time deadline for a decision, its inclusion here was agreed to.

(f) Planned maintenance contract

The contract for the planned maintenance of Penlee House was due for renewal and the current contractors proposed a figure with a small cost increase. The Town Clerk reported that this increase was within the margins of the budget and the Director verified that the House received excellent service from the company and it was

RESOLVED: that the contract should be renewed on the terms proposed by the contractor.

6. FINANCIAL POSITION

The committee considered its financial position to 31 March 2009 and also considered payments made in the months of February and March 2009 and it was

RESOLVED: to approve the financial position and payments (see Appendix 'A' for both financial position and payments made).

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Chairman
30 June 2009