

THE FRIENDS OF THE STROUD DISTRICT (COWLE) MUSEUM
Minutes of the 4th AGM held at 11.15am on Saturday 11 November 2017
The Learning Pavilion, the Walled Garden, the Museum in the Park

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair thanked all those attending (29 members) and welcomed them to the meeting. Papers had been available on the website prior to the meeting, but further paper copies were available which were distributed. Apologies were received from Juliet Shipman and Caroline Denny.

2. Approval of the 3rd AGM minutes

There were no comments or alterations to the minutes, which were accepted unanimously.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Report of Trustees – Fred Ward, Chair

The report was available on the website, along with the financial report. The Chair referred to highlights of the report.

- The Walled Garden funding spend
- The Museum Scarlet Hare now resides at the Cotswold Canal Trust office in Wallbridge. The amount of funding raised from the auction is not as yet known.
- The Simon Morriss painting 'The Glass House' has been purchase for the Museum.
- The pergola has been installed in the Garden and additional plants bought.
- The Museum and the Walled Garden have been registered as assets of community value.

The Chair stated that the aims and objectives of the Friends remain the same as last year:

- Encouraging and supporting the Museum
- Raising funds for improvements, acquisitions and conservation
- Providing practical help.

The Chair thanked all trustees past and present for their help and support during the year. He spoke about the challenges facing the Museum regarding budget cuts, saying that the Friends needed to respond positively to support staff. The Friends should promote the Museum to family and friends, support events and recruit new Friends. There were 226 Friends during the past year.

5. Re-election of three Trustees – Margaret Lister, Juliet Shipman and Fred Ward

In addition there are three vacancies. There were no volunteers forthcoming, so the re-election was carried unanimously. The three vacancies remain unfilled. The Chair encouraged anyone interested to come forward, saying that there were four meetings a year, and the task was no too onerous.

6. Approval of Financial Accounts 2016/17 (posted on the website)

The Chair referred to the Auditor's report posted on the website prior to the meeting. He noted that the Walled Garden Fund was now near completion and ran through the report asking for any queries. It was noted that the dates were incorrect in a couple of places - 2015 and 2016 instead of 2016 and 2017. This would be corrected and the report signed after correction. The Accounts were accepted unanimously.

7. Proposal

The Chair proposed to the meeting that the Friends agree to give their wholehearted report to the Museum officers in their endeavours to ensure the Museum's future. The officers have experience and expertise and the Friends should support their decisions.

It was suggested by a member that this discussion should be held after the Museum's report, and this was agreed.

8. Appointment of Auditors – Randall and Payne LLP

There were no objections to Randall and Payne continuing as auditors.

9. Museum Report

Kevin Ward (Museum Development Manager) gave his thanks to the Friends for their help and support, saying that the Walled Garden project could not have begun without it.

- Manifesto:

To provide a Museum service that encourages everyone who works or lives in, or visits Stroud district to be proud of its past present and future.

- Mission:
Enable people to access and share the collection and heritage of Stroud district for inspiration, learning and enjoyment.
- The present Forward Plan ends in 2018, and the main targets were achieved. There is a new Forward Plan in development for 2018-2023.
- Visitor numbers have increase up to October this year by 14% and overall usage by 7%. The Museum uses social media but numbers are not recorded. Sunday is the most popular day to visit, with Tuesday last.
- There is a massive amount of volunteer hours recorded. The Museum has recently begun using 'Volunteer Makers', a project supported by Arts Council England which matches people to the skills needed. By way of reference, the Corinium Museum in Cirencester is already using this.
- The MDM referred to the risks coming up due to increased pressure on funding for local government. The Museum has been tasked with reducing Full Time Equivalent (FTE) by up to 20%. There are nearly 9 FTE staff at the moment. One suggestion is to close on Tuesdays apart from room hire and school visits. There is a need to be more commercially aware within the remit of the manifesto and mission. Funding is being sought to fund a consultant to look into the proposals to give a fresh overview in relation to membership/supporter scheme. He spoke about other museums where the Friends had combined with a museum membership scheme. This is being done in partnership with the Friends Committee.
- Collections storage is a further risk. Although the lease for the rooms at the School of Science and Art is now settled there could be an issue with Unit 28 in Stonehouse. The unit is due to be handed back to the landowner in 2019, and discussions have begun with SDC Asset Management regarding the future.
- The MDM ran through recent activities highlighting the purchase of a posy ring, and the recent café and shop developments. He also referred to visitor surveys and 'Audience Finder' which give information on the type of visits that occur e.g. 2/3s of visitors are female, and 4/5 of visitors come by car. The Museum has retained its Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance from Visit England. There has been an extensive exhibition programme and activities in the Garden.

A member asked how many volunteers there were: Around 40-45 regulars.

A member asked whether charging for entrance had been considered: The MDM stated that this had not been looked at. The design for the Museum was meant to be free entry and changes to this policy might mean structural changes to reception as well as conceptual/perception changes.

A member asked how visitor numbers were counted: A clicker is used on reception, with a volunteer taking an audit place four times a year.

A member asked whether the Museum could influence SDC on the recently announced parking charges consultation, which includes the Park: The MDM stated that the Museum would be part of the consultation, as would the Leisure Centre and other users.

The MDM was asked how helpful Friends can be in these challenging times. He stated that support was needed in the community, advocacy for the Museum and active support in general. There will be a need to work with the Friends to develop the Museum after the cuts are done to look at becoming more self-sustainable.

The Chair stated that this was the rationale behind the proposal in Item 7. Friends do not have the expertise or competence to work on their own to support the Museum, we need to work in partnership with the staff, and to help fund an external advisor to work with Friends and staff. There might need to be an EGM at some point in the future, but the intention was to work with the Museum and support staff at this difficult time. The proposal was made by Marion Hearfield, seconded by Howard Beard and carried unanimously.

10. Any other business

There was no other business, and the meeting broke for refreshments.

Close of Meeting 12.40pm

(The next committee meeting was agreed for Monday 5 February at 2pm, in the Museum.)