

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM COUNCIL

Minutes of the 163rd Meeting of the Museum Council held in the Boardroom at the National Army Museum, Chelsea at 1000hrs on Wednesday 18th July 2018

Present

General Sir Richard Shirreff (Chairman), Lieutenant General Sir Simon Mayall, Mr William Wells, Ms Jessica Spungin, Mr Patrick Aylmer, Mr John Duncan, Dr Paul Schreier, Mr Guy Perricone, Dr Jonathan Boff, Mrs Sabine Vandenbroucke.

In Attendance

Field Marshal Sir John Chapple, Mr Mike Robbins, Chief Accountant, Army Resources.

Brigadier Justin Maciejewski, Director, National Army Museum, Mr Mike O'Connor, Deputy Director, Ms Lizzy Sutherland, Committee Clerk (Minutes).

Item 1. Opening remarks

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Item 2. Register of Members' Interests

The Register was made available in accordance with Charity Commission advice and no amendments or additions were made.

Item 3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from HRH The Duke of Kent, Royal Patron of the NAM, Brigadier Martyn Gamble, Head of Arms & Services, Home Command, Mr Richard Hughes and Ms Brenda Hobday.

Item 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Actions

An amendment was made to item 9, paragraph 1. Council approved the minutes of the previous meeting and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a true record.

The Director ran through the action tracker updating Council on the various action points from previous meetings.

Item 5. Director's Update & Business Plan

The Director presented PowerPoint slides which outlined quarter 1 performance and commercial numbers. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were derived from the standard Association of Leading Visitors Attractions (ALVA) KPIs and an industry segmentation of visitors was used to allow for comparison with other institutions.

The data showed the empathiser segment had fallen since the relaunch, whereas guided tours proved successful. The expert segment was above target, along with days out & sightseeing segments. The NAM was engaging with new audiences. Visits from young families (excluding Play Base) had increased. Self-developers were also above target but it was unknown if they would be repeat visitors or if it was a case of pent up demand following the Museum's closure during rebuild. Overall, there were some good signs. The Army observers were pleased that the Museum was attracting more young people.

The hot weather hit visitor numbers across the sector but encouragingly half term figures were up from last year. The commercial results were positive, raw retail performance was up against footfall, a very good result. Some lessons learnt from year one were beginning to show through in Q1. Play Base continued to give good results and birthday parties were performing well.

Corporate hire had also risen but spare capacity remained. The Army and Regimental Associations were given a discount on venue hire. The NAM was working with other organisations to market Chelsea as a weekend destination.

Council found the results very encouraging overall and pointed out that the core empathisers group could be reconnected relatively quickly without alienating any of the other groups.

The Director expressed his intention for soldier stories to be told more deeply to attract the experts, self-developers & empathisers, and that stories of heroism and selflessness were key to emotional engagement, as well as being historically factual without being hagiographic.

Council discussed a slide of the NAM's current staffing by division and department.

The Director outlined the concept and programme for exhibitions and the public programme. A fitting programme had been developed for WWI. The Munnings exhibition will be key for the Museum to achieve its reforecast visitor target this year with the potential to draw in Canadians living in London, equestrians and traditional art lovers. The Hungarian Hussars will be the first smaller exhibition; the NAM was trying to connect with groups who live in Britain and whose culture had influenced Our Army. The longer term programme would be focused on experts and empathisers, to rapidly regain ground with them.

The NAM was exploring ways to rebuild relations with key groups; the British Army/Defence, the British and Commonwealth military history community, Army veterans and regimental charities. The Museum would for example host a joint conference with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and collaborate with The United Services Institution of India on the Indian Army collection. The Field Marshal offered his assistance as he had belonged to all five of those groups, which Council were thankful for.

A Member updated Council on the Research & Collections Committee. A list of 25 potential Members had been identified. The group's aims were, firstly, to provide a forum for expert advice from historians to museum curators, secondly, to reach out to the academic community and thirdly, to establish a link with popular historians, journalists and broadcasters. The Advisory Group hoped to launch by in January 2019 to help inform the NAM programme and provide advice on specific topics working to the Collections Committee. They will support the development of a new master narrative.

The Business Plan was reviewed and the objective to build greater financial resilience and sustainability was agreed as a priority for this year. A Member of the Performance, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (PA&RA) relayed the PA&RA's support to finalise the redevelopment project and to consolidate in order to be able to tackle curatorial matters. Council endorsed the plan and the approach to stabilise financially, and for development to follow.

Positive promotion of the NAM through strong strategic communications was discussed. Council Members agreed to publishing their biographies on the NAM website.

Item 6. GDPR Update

The Deputy Director reported that the NAM had a robust GDPR plan in place and held monthly meetings to ensure compliance. A detailed paper on GDPR had been reported to the PA&RA Committee. The compliance process began in May 2017. An online self-assessment process has been completed with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) this year which has resulted in the Museum achieving a green rating.

Item 7. Reports from Committees

7.1 Building for the Future Committee

The Building for the Future Committee was satisfied with the final account and Council approved the figures.

7.2 Performance, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The PA&RA Chairman reported on a very strong Q1 which was ahead of budget.

The Committee were considering how to better align financial reporting of NAMTL as part of the NAM group which Council thought was sensible.

The Internal audit strategy would explore GDPR and the Museum's accountability of the collection, which Council agreed with.

Item 8. Finance Summaries

Quarter 1 looked good with very little movement against predictions. Council was happy with the results.

Item 9. Draft NAM Consolidation Financial Accounts

The Deputy Director confirmed the National Audit Office 2018 (NAO) had agreed to file the Museum's accounts after Parliamentary recess in November to allow more time for scrutiny by Council. The NAO had completed the first tranche of their audit and would return in September for another two weeks of testing.

Item 10. NAMTL Financial Statement & Audit

The Chair of NAMTL reported that the annual accounts had been signed off with no qualifications.

Play Base instituted an effective price rise which did not impact demand. Birthday parties were hugely successful and a good source of income.

Venue hire was now managed by dedicated staff, with a 65% conversion rate from enquiry to booking. Lead-in time was on average 3 months. The corporate Christmas offer was ready, and there will be a promotional event in September for organisations to come in and experience the spaces. The strategy for engaging events websites was being refined. The new room hire brochure was circulated and well received by Members.

Item 11. Future Programme

The Director displayed a slide of the Museum's future exhibition programme from 2019 – 2023. The Assistant Director (Collections) joined the meeting and set out the WWI programme 'Victory, Sacrifice and Remembrance'. The digital programme '100 Objects in 100 Days' will be sign posted by social media every day. A serving Colonel will speak as the Poet in Residence. Great speakers had been lined up for the annual conference on 17 November 2018, which the Museum was working with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission on. Development work for the Germany exhibition was progressing well. The Munnings exhibition would open at the end of November 2018 and run to March 2019.

Members liked the future programmes framework, with the modular flexible approach and the use of a variety of platforms. The Chairman felt the programme was well balanced and connected Our Army more broadly to the community.

Item 12. Health & Safety Report

The Deputy Director confirmed the Museum was a safe place to operate. The majority of accidents took place in Play Base and were the result of children playing. No serious accidents which require RIDL notification had occurred. Searcys carried out their own Health & Safety checks and produced a regular risk assessment to the NAM. Council were satisfied that all the appropriate Health & Safety measures were in place.

Item 13. Army Sponsor Update

The Director reported that the Army would be heavily involved in the Army heritage strategy review which will relaunch in February 2019 and be hosted at the NAM.

Item 14. Council, Committees, Membership & Terms of Reference

The Director reported that the Chairman of the Collections Committee was chairing a review of SOFNAM.

Council considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Development Committee.

Item 15. Any Other Business

New Members expressed an interest in visiting the collection at Stevenage which the Committee Clerk would arrange.

The Chairman thanked everyone and closed the meeting.

Dates of Council Meetings next year:

27 February 2019
29 May 2019
31 July 2019
6 November 2019