

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM COUNCIL

Minutes of the NAM Council Meeting at 10:00hrs -12:30hrs on Wednesday 8th November 2023 in the Boardroom at the NAM Chelsea

Present

Lieutenant General Sir Simon Mayall (Chair), Lieutenant General Sir George Norton (Deputy Chair), Mr Tim Cooke, Mrs Sabine Vandenbroucke, Mr Guy Perricone, Mrs Judith Donovan, Lord Andrew Roberts, Prof Jonathan Boff, Mr Neil Johnson, Ms Sue Mackenzie, Dr Paul Schreier, Prof Ali Ansari, Mr Paul Davies, Mr Chris Finney GC.

In Attendance

Brigadier Justin Maciejewski, (Director, National Army Museum), Mr Mike O'Connor, (Deputy Director NAM), Ms Lizzy Sutherland (Clerk to Council, Minutes), Mr Mike Robbins, (Army Chief Accountant), Mr Ewan Candlish (National Audit Office), Mrs Emma Lucas (NAO Audit Officer), Mr Jeremy Fowler (Home Command), Mr Chris Horner (Chair, Members Advisory Group), Brigadier Nick Doyle (Head of Arms and Services, Home Command) and Dr Katie Best (observer).

Item 1. Council Administration

Item 1.1 Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair's reception at the Chelsea History Festival this year was a great success, and the event will be locked in annually.

Item 1.2 Register of Members' Interests

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

Item 1.3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from HRH the Duke of Kent.

Item 1.4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes were approved as a true record. The Director talked through the action tracker. It was agreed the Legacy Policy will sit under the Development Committee.

Items 2. Director's Update

The Director updated Council on AMOT situation.

Chelsea History Festival was a great success this year with over 10K tickets sold, supported by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Cadogan. Ms Nadine Thompson was hired as Business Development Manager and she will drive the Chelsea Heritage Quarter concept, working with NAM, Royal Hospital Chelsea (RHC), The Chelsea Physic Garden and Cadogan.

The Director presented his performance dashboard slide. Footfall was broadly heading towards 80% of pre-Covid numbers, but likely would be slightly below that level.

The website was performing well with encouraging dwell time and increase of numbers of visits.

The Patrons & Members database had been cleansed and the systems for payment were up and running. Two new Patrons signed up the past week.

The Soldier Gallery will have to close for ten weeks to for the repair of the flooring and refresh. The cost will be covered by the original contractor.

The Shakespeare in War exhibition has proved quite popular, attracting new audiences.

NAM's Annual Accounts will be laid before Parliament next week. The revaluation of assets and new NAO requirements had been challenging for the Finance Team this year in light of the British Museum collection problems coming to everybody's attention. Additionally, there was a requirement to update the collections value based on the 2010 valuation.

The new Collections Management System (CMS) was tendered in line with Government Public Procurement Regulations 2015 and five suitably qualified providers were short listed. To ensure this work goes ahead data cleansing on CABAL will continue before the CMS is introduced.

NAMTL profits were down due to the increase in supplier costs. These increases wherever possible have not been passed on to customers who are price sensitive during the cost-of-living crisis. Revenue was good but expenditure was up 57%. Improving commercial performance will be the focus for the coming year.

Staff turnover was down this year and recruitment was going well in all areas except retail where turnover tended to remain high.

With the recent thefts at the British Museum, Trustees asked for an update risk report and some key metrics around collections management.

Item 3. Independent Public Body Review of the Service Museums 2023

Council considered the recommendations in detail. The review findings would be made public.

The Chair noted that a lot of scrutiny had gone into this. Council were comfortable with the recommendations.

Item 3.1 Draft Financial Framework Agreement

The Financial Framework Agreement will be circulated to Council for consultation. It will be finalised in January and the Business Plan will be presented at February Council.

Item 4 Updates from sub-committees & NAMTL

4.1 Development Committee

A new Research & Development Officer, had been appointed, a great addition to the team. Plans for greater academic cooperation with Sandhurst were progressing well. Our historians were getting recognition as NAM Historians.

4.2 NAMTL/Enterprise Committee

The marketing team was in a good place and were performing effectively on and offline. There was a 70K door drop for Chelsea History Festival this year. NAMTL continued to build marketing strategies. There had been some staffing issues, but things were now moving in the right direction. PlayBase and birthday parties were performing well but the Shop needed attention. Christmas lines will go in after Remembrance weekend. The new Souvenir Book was highly recommended. There was still more work to do but a plan was in place.

4.3 Performance, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee

The Annual Accounts and Financial Procedures Manual were reviewed with minor alterations. The status of Reserves was checked and there was no reason to change anything in our investment approach. The next audit will focus on payroll and recruitment, estate management and visitor experience. Audits have brought useful insights e.g. the introduction of an Information Officer. A comprehensive list of all policies and which committees will own them (with review dates) had been produced.

4.4 Collections & Research Committee

Interesting acquisitions were highlighted including the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, which could be the basis for a good PHD study downstream. Interviews for the new Collections Management System had been completed. A recommendation will be firmed up for the Director. The Collections report reassured Members on security. Council agreed this should be a standard agenda item henceforth.

4.5 People Committee

This committee originally met once a year to discuss salaries and remunerations, but it has now been expanded to look at HR issues, bi-annually. Meetings had been productive with Hardship Loans introduced for staff, Employee Recognition revitalised and regular staff surveys. Succession planning and Senior Leadership Team functions going forward had been very useful. Any ideas for this committee were welcomed from Council.

Item 5. Finance Summaries to 30 September 2023

The Museum was in a relatively healthy financial position.

Item 6. Health & Safety Report

The Deputy Director confirmed the Museum is as safe as practicably possible. Several minor “tweaks” will be carried out in the refurbishment of PlayBase to try to minimise any accidents after re-opening.

Item 7 Any Other Business

7.1 Council timings

There was no other business, and the Chair closed the meeting.