

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART**Note of the meeting held on 23 March 2021 at 4.30pm [INF09]**

[Virtual meeting]

- Members present: Caroline Nokes
Barbara Keeley
Mr Gagan Mohindra
Caroline Nokes
- Apologies: Simon Baynes, Sarah Champion, Sally-Ann Hart, Kim Johnson,
Dean Russell and Hywel Williams
- In attendance: Gary Connor, Media Officer
Melissa Hamnett, Curator of Works of Art and Head of Heritage
Collections
Emma Gormley, Assistant Curator
Lorcan O'Donoghue, Media Officer
Grace Saull, Assistant Curator

In the absence of the Chair, Caroline Nokes was called to the chair.

1) Informal Note [INF08]

The Committee **agreed** the informal notes of the meeting on 23 February 2021.

2) Parliament's Heritage Vision and Strategy [WOA 48]

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett introduced the Heritage Vision and Strategy, which comprised a set of common priorities that applied to Parliament's heritage collections to promote better collaboration between the teams managing the collections, particularly in light of Restoration and Renewal, and sought the Committee's views on ways to promote and embed it.

The following points were then raised:

- Several Members welcomed the Vision and Strategy.
- The Chair asked what was being done to ensure that suitable interpretative information was provided for those with disabilities. Ms Hamnett said that she was keen to engage with different audience groups to develop a more tailored engagement approach within the Vision and Strategy, and that was already advocating change in this area with colleagues in the Communications and Digital teams. The development of a new Heritage Collections website, the ongoing Review of the Collection and the establishment of a Collections Advisory Group were also key elements of this work.

- A Member suggested holding an exhibition about the Works of Art Committee and its role as a way of engaging with Members with its work and the Heritage Vision and Strategy. The Chair supported the suggestion.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

3) Engagement Strategy and forward plan [WOA 49]

Emma Gormley, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Gormley gave a presentation on the five key engagement strategies for the Committee to adopt during the current Parliament together with a forward plan for the next 12 months which included a programme of displays, exhibitions and events.

The following points were then raised:

- It was noted that the ethnicity of those depicted in works and how they identified was complex and was not always explicit and that this should be considered when curating displays.
- A Member said that the various regions of the UK should be represented in the Committee's forward programme and strategic objectives.
- It was noted that the survey on the review of artworks in the Members' Tea Room would present Members with several potential schemes rather than seek open-ended feedback and would provide an opportunity to engage Members with the work of the Committee.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** the Engagement Strategy and forward plan.

4) Portrait commissioning process [WOA 50]

Emma Gormley, Assistant Curator, and Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, gave a visual presentation on the portrait commissioning process.

The following points were then raised:

- A Member suggested that small group portraits could be commissioned as a way to diversify representation in the Collection.
- A Member emphasised that the options put to the Committee for commissions should include a range of potential sitters from across the political spectrum.
- The Chair and several Members supported a proposal to commission portraits of House staff to celebrate their contributions to the work of the House.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update; Works of Art Disposals Policy and review [WOA 51 and 52]

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett sought the Committee's views on reviewing and updating the disposals policy, which had been revised and adopted by both Houses in 2014.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update and **endorsed** the proposed changes to be forwarded to the Corporate Officers for review.

5) Updates, acquisitions, displays, moves and loans

a) Diversity commission update

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett said that there was no progress to report since the last meeting and that an update would be provided later in the spring once Mr Speaker had been briefed on the proposal.

b) House of Lords 'Pioneers' display [WOA 53]

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee on a proposal to add a graphic panel on Baron Sinha of Raipur, the first BAME peer to sit in the House of Lords to the *Pioneers* display in the Admissions Order Office corridor to reflect the achievements of early BAME MPs in Parliament.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** to the inclusion of a panel on Lord Sinha in the *Pioneers* display.

c) Heritage Collections Online Services (website update)

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, provided an update on progress of the Heritage Collections Online Services project. The project was now at the staging phase and was on track for delivery in spring/summer. There would be more details at the next meeting of the Committee, as well as a preview of the new website.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

d) Collections care update

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett brought to the Committee's attention a recent incidence of water ingress in the State Apartments of the Speaker's House.

The following points were then raised:

- Acknowledgement that the incident reflected a wider difficulty across the Palace in respect of preventing water ingress.
- The possibility of using protective materials, such as Melinex, to prevent damage to works of art in the future. This solution was intended to be used across the Speaker's House.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

e) Members' Dining Room rehang

Emma Gormley, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Gormley reported that the portrait of Oliver Cromwell in the Members' Dining Room that was currently on display was due to be returned to the owner as the loan period was over and would be replaced with the portrait of Henry Fox, 1st Baron Holland of Foxley (1705-1774), by Joshua Reynolds

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

f) International Women's Day 2021 lecture

Emma Gormley, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Gormley said that the annual International Women's Day lecture given by Dr Emma Peplow and Dr Priscila Pivatto, from the History of Parliament Trust, with an extended introduction by Diane Abbott MP, on the subject 'Decided on by men': oral histories from women MPs had taken place the previous week. The event took place via TeamsLive with the support of the Visitor Services team and was attended virtually by nearly 450 people and audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6) Any other business

Financial statement (as at 28 February) [WOA 54]

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

Heritage Collections monthly highlights report [WOA 55]

The Committee **noted** the highlights report for February.

7) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet on **Tuesday 23 April at 4.30pm.**