

Committee: **COMMUNITY COMMITTEE and
PERFORMANCE SELECT COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item

Date: 9 and 15 November 2006

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Title: **MUSEUM AUDIT REPORT: CONTEXT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Item for decision

Summary

1. This report provides the context and essential background information for the assessment of the recent audit report on the Museum Service. In particular, it explains the role of volunteers, which in the Museum Service is relatively restricted, and why some general criteria referred to in the audit report, such as Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks, may therefore be inappropriate or the risk contained in other ways. It confirms recommendations already enacted within the Museum Service and advises members where recommendations require action by the Council. Members are further directed to the Museum Service Forward Plan 2006 (Stage II) which places further improvements to sales and visitor facilities in context of future developments.

Recommendations

2. To approve the implementation of recommendations at the Museum as described in this report. (Council policies for Use of Volunteers and Child Protection will require separate approval when completed)

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report:
 - * Internal Audit Report – Museum 2005-06 (10 March 2006)
 - * Museum Service Forward Plan (Community Committee minutes 8 June 2006)

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Volunteers have been instructed on completing new cashing-up slips
Community Safety	Children and vulnerable adults protected because accompanied by teachers, parents and carers, and all Museum staff have CRB checks. Volunteers do not have access to children and vulnerable adults that might

	require CRB checks.
Equalities	Procedures used at sales desk have to be 'low tech' to be operable by a rota of 30 volunteers, mostly retired and working at most 2 - 2.5 hrs per week.
Finance	Some small reductions in risk (recording cashing-up and banking) achieved through implementation of recommendations. Ongoing cost of CRB checks for staff (current rates £50 per person per 3 years)
Human Rights	N/A
Legal implications	None at present. CRB checks for working with children may be reviewed by government in future.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	Museum Service

Situation

6. **Context.** It is important to assess the situation in proportion to the restricted nature of the volunteers' role, the small scale of the sales operation and the limited amount of staff time available for managing this. Criteria used by audit are designed to cover all types of voluntary work and in a few instances may be disproportionate or inappropriate for Museum volunteers' specific circumstances (see 1.5 CRB checks below). The purpose of this report is to allow members to assess the situation and determine the appropriate measures to contain risks and the resources required.
7. **The volunteer's role.** There is a rota of about 30 volunteers who staff the reception / sales desk in the Museum foyer from 10 to 5 (4.30 in winter) on weekdays and from 2 to 5 (or 4.30) on Sundays and Bank Holidays (on Saturdays there is a paid Saturday Assistant). There are three shifts of 2 to 2.5 hours per day. Most volunteers work one shift per week or per fortnight; a few on an occasional basis. Nearly all are retired local residents.
8. **The Reception / Sales desk.** Volunteers' duties are to welcome and sell tickets to visitors, answer the phone and transfer calls, and sell publications and souvenirs, most of which are 'pocket money' items for schools, our main market. There are always staff on hand to whom enquiries and any problems can be instantly referred; in practice, there is a 'hidden' cost in time other staff spend 'minding' volunteers when the Visitor Services Officer is not there. Income from ticket and souvenir sales (2005/06) amounted to £16,600 net for the year, equivalent to £320 per week. This means a volunteer on an 'average' shift would be handling around £20 income.

- 9, **Staff time.** The Reception / Sales desk, supervision of its volunteers, stock and cash from sales is part of the role of the Visitor Services Officer, who took on this role some years ago from the Museum Society. Her hours include 3 hours per week to cover this; in practice it takes significantly more than 3 hours per week and there is a balance to be struck with other duties, including publicity, fund-raising, activities programme, access, editing text and exhibitions, and financial administration (post is 90% F/T).
10. **Audit Conclusion.** Audit concluded that there were 'no significant problems' but made a number of recommendations which have either already been implemented by the Museum, or are corporate issues for the Council. Information is set out below using the paragraph numbers and headings from the Audit Report.

AUDIT REPORT

1.3 Previous Recommendations

The banking of cash was part of the conditions of appointment of the Visitor Services Officer, who banks money on different days and times as a security precaution. Costs of employing a security firm were previously investigated but queried as the cost originally quoted seemed disproportionate to the amount banked, when the Museum was under pressure to reduce budgets and increase income. The Council contract for cash collection has since come up for renewal and the Museum will be included in the new BDI contract for cash collection, details and costs for which are awaited from the Council. Income to be banked, including cash donations and cheques from schools, now averages at around £475 per week (2005/06).

1.4 General Comments

The Museum's Forward Plan 2006 envisages a two-stage development. The Heritage Quest Centre (Stage I) will enable a re-assessment of the Museum building and Museum/Castle site to take place (Stage II). The emphasis in Stage II will be improvements to visitor facilities at the Museum, including a re-assessment of reception, shop and front-of-house. Meanwhile, the volunteers save the Council the cost of paid reception staff, estimated at roughly £30,000 per year, to cover the same hours.

1.5 Policy & Guidelines for Involvement of Volunteers

Council policies on the Use of Volunteers and Child Protection are needed, and will cover other services as well as the Museum. Museum staff have already made some input into the draft Use of Volunteers Policy (currently with Executive Programme Manager - Quality of Life). The Education Officer will be attending a seminar on child protection policies for museums in December, after which the Museum's input to a Council policy will be drafted.

The recruitment of volunteers involves interview and assessment by the Visitor Services Officer and a trial shift, during which the Visitor Services Officer discreetly observes and assesses the volunteer's competence in dealing with the public, telephone, sales and cash handling. In recent years new volunteers have been either known members of the Museum Society, or have been introduced to the Museum by the Uttlesford Volunteer Bureau or by tried and trusted volunteers who have provided verbal references. A reference proforma is now in use (copy in appendix) to request a reference from new volunteers. In the unlikely event of an unknown newcomer applying, staff would ask for two references.

Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are intended for people in charge of, or with unsupervised access to, children and vulnerable adults. All school children and vulnerable adults visiting the Museum are supervised by teachers or carers. Children visiting for family activities have to be accompanied by a responsible adult. All Museum staff have been CRB checked to cover those occasional incidents when staff may have to deal with lone teenagers or children who have become separated from adult supervisors. Volunteers have to remain at the desk and would never be involved in such incidents – there are always staff on duty to deal with any such issues. There is therefore no necessity to apply CRB checks to volunteers. If despite this the Council decides to apply CRB checks to all volunteers, this will incur an additional cost of about £1,500 (30 volunteers x £50 fee) on the Museum's budget this year and every three years for renewal, assuming all volunteers agree to being checked. The only exception, which has arisen since the audit report, is for three volunteers who have offered to help the Education Officer with holiday activities in the galleries. Although children at these events will be supervised by parents, it is felt that as a 'family friendly' museum, volunteers as well as staff running activities should be CRB checked, and the relatively low cost (£150) can be absorbed within existing budgets.

1.6 Health & Safety of Volunteers

Records of volunteers are kept, but do not match the audit's specific definition of a formal record / register. A typed list of all volunteers with contact details is kept in the Museum's Emergency Plan, and less formally, volunteers have been included in the Museum Address book, used by staff on a day-to-day basis; new / retiring volunteers and placements students are listed in the Museum quarterly report. Volunteers' details have now been transferred to an additional, separate register to comply exactly with the audit definition.

Likewise, basic **health & safety** measures in the Museum for volunteers have always been part of their induction process and notes on essentials (fire procedures for volunteers, summoning staff in an emergency) have always been in the volunteers' Information Folder for reference at the desk. The audit recommendation takes these a stage further in a unified H&S policy/guidelines for volunteers, which will be dependent on the Council's

Use of Volunteers' Policy and require input from Human Resources and H&S staff.

1.7 Recording of Shop and Ticket Sales

1.8

The existing cashing-up procedures required the volunteer at the end of the afternoon to add up the cash, leave a standard float in the cash drawer and bag the day's takings, recording the amount and date on the bag before passing it to staff to store in the safe. Recording cashing-up has been improved to meet audit recommendations with a new cashing-up slip for volunteers to complete (copy in appendix). Checking, totalling and reconciling sales and ticket income is carried out weekly under the supervision of the Visitor Services Officer by a Museum Society volunteer. This system has been independently checked by a Council cashier (24/10/06) and deemed entirely satisfactory.

1.9 Education Income

The Education Officer issues booking confirmation / invoices to every group booking an educational session, for which a standard fee is charged. All group bookings are listed in the Museum Diary which has to now provide an independent check for reconciling education income against groups invoiced. The audit recommendation to keep a separate register of numbered education invoices has been implemented by the Education Officer. Copies of any reminders issued are kept (as they have always been) but this applies to only a very few schools as nearly all pay on the day of their visit.

1.10 Web-Site

The problem identified by audit was that although the Museum's activities programme had been submitted for posting on the Museum web pages, only the first few items appeared as 'news headlines' on the home page and users need to search the pages further to access the full programme. Protocols for updating the website have been clarified with IT and updates to pages are monitored and allocated to staff at monthly staff meetings; demands of exhibition and other deadlines however mean that sometimes website updates cannot be first priority. If future website developments permit, it would be helpful if Museum staff could edit frequently-changed pages directly on-line and if some changes to the design of the Museum's web pages could be made.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Potential risks as identified by Audit Report	Low	Medium	Museum recommendations implemented; those for Council are in hand.

Appendix – Forms Attached

- 1.5 Reference Proforma for Museum Volunteers
- 1.6 Proforma for recording volunteers' details in Volunteers' Register
- 1.7 Cashing-up slip for volunteers to complete at desk on daily basis



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Saffron Walden Museum

Museum Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1JL
 Telephone (01799) 510333/4, Fax (01799) 510333/4
 Email: museum@uttlesford.gov.uk Website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Curator: Carolyn Wingfield

To:

Date:

REFERENCE FOR VOLUNTEER

XXXX has offered to join the museum's group of volunteers who host the 'Welcome' desk and small shop and help with various museum projects.

Your name has been given as a reference. Please will you be kind enough to complete the simple form below and return to us in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope.

Saffron Walden Museum is indebted to its many volunteers, without whom we could not open 363 days a year. Thank You.

Carolyn Wingfield
 Curator

Maureen Evans
 Visitor Services

How long have you known the above?.....

In what capacity?.....

In your opinion would he/she be:

1. suitable to work as a volunteer at the museum? Yes No Not sure
2. confident and friendly when dealing with visitors of all ages? Yes No Not sure
3. responsible and reliable? Yes No Not sure
4. competent at handling cash? Yes No Not sure
5. able to take and appropriately pass on telephone messages? Yes No Not sure

If there is anything further you think we should know, please continue overleaf.

Name and address:.....

Signed:..... Date:.....

THIS INFORMATION IS PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL
and kept by Museum staff in a safe place

First Name:	
Surname:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	Mobile:
<u>Emergency Contact:</u> In case you feel unwell.	
Name:	
Relationship to you: (eg. daughter, friend, wife)	
Telephone No.	
Medical information: Is there anything we need to know about in case, at any time, you feel unwell? Eg. tablets or spray	

03/06

DAILY CASH PROCEDURE**DATE & DATE:**Morning Float: £20.00 in drawer Checked: £25.00 in bag Checked: End of Day Float: £20 in drawer Checked: £25.00 in bag Checked:

CASHING UP - SURPLUS. If you have any time, please list the remaining money and place in a bag with this sheet.
Please ensure that the day and date are on both sheet and bag.

£20 notes	
£10 notes	
£5 notes	
£2 coins	
£1 coins	
50p coins	
20p coins	
10p coins	
5p coins	
Copper	
TOTAL	