

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 17 JANUARY 1996**

Present:- Councillors Mrs M R Green, D W Gregory and D M Miller (Uttlesford Members); N B Newman, Mrs J Sturge and A Watson (Museum Society).

Officers in attendance:- L M Pole and J Unwin.

**I. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G W Powers.

Mr Newman informed the Working Party that David Steel was unable to attend the meeting as he had recently suffered a stroke. It was understood that for health reasons he had stood down as Secretary of the Museum Society a short while ago. Members of the Working Group were sorry to hear this news and paid tribute to the positive contribution which he had made whilst serving as Secretary of the Museum Society.

**I. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of the Museum Management Joint Working Party held on 4 October 1995 were received.

**I. BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute MM13 - Report of the Chairman of the Museum Society Management Committee**

With reference to the last paragraph, Mr Pole confirmed details of the bid for Lottery funding. The bid would be made to the National Heritage Fund, not the Millennium Fund.

With reference to the Museum Society's application to the Charity Commissioners, Mr Watson confirmed that all the formal paperwork had now been completed and the application had been lodged with the Charity Commissioners.

**I. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Mr Newman reported briefly on a recent meeting of the Museum Society Management Committee.

He referred to current arrangements to provide suitable facilities to enable visitors to view a map of Essex in the entrance hall. He also submitted a brief appraisal of the report made by the officers of the Museum Society at the meeting.

He referred to the success of the programme of lectures which the Society had held since the last meeting of the Working Party.

He also referred to the preparation of the new Natural History Gallery, work which was being carried out to prepare a guide to the new galleries for school children and arrangements which were being made for providing manually operated and computer operated display features in the new gallery to offer children the opportunity of 'hands-on' experience.

He also reported that a special meeting of the Museum Society Management Committee had been held to discuss the implications of the feasibility study for future policy and the development of the Museum's services.

**I. CURATOR'S REPORT**

Mr Pole submitted a report on the operation of the Museum for the period from October to December 1995.

The special exhibition 'Textiles of Imperial China' had been particularly successful and had generated many enquiries and created much interest in the Museum. The exhibition had opened on 7 October and would run until 24 March

1996. Special events in connection with the Chinese Textiles exhibition and an activity day, 'A Taste of Tudor Times', on 28 December 1995 had been well supported.

Regarding permanent displays, progress was being made on the preparation work for the new natural history galleries and tenders would soon be advertised for the construction work. Work on design and display in connection with the new galleries was progressing well.

He referred to the preparation of a case displaying ancient Greek material some of which was on loan from the Fitzwilliam Museum and Chelmsford Museum. This display was attracting much interest from schools. Work was also proceeding on labelling in the Costume Gallery.

Details of the Museum's work with schools were reported together with details of staff development initiatives and talks made to outside bodies.

A report was given on the range of items lent to schools and other Museums, the range of items brought in for identification and the advice and assistance given by the Museum to students and researchers.

Concerning improvements to make the Museum more accessible, he referred to an access audit undertaken by the Royal National Institute for the Blind in November and an application which had been made for a British Gas/ADAPT Award. Staff were also receiving training in assisting and communicating with deaf people.

Public attendances during the period showed a decrease of 8.5% over the previous year, producing a decrease in entrance charge income of 11%. Schools' use also showed a decrease of 5% in numbers over the Autumn term as a whole, although there had been an increase in teaching related income of 90% compared to the same term in 1994 as a greater proportion of school parties were visiting the Museum for talks and presentations rather than just to look at the displays in the galleries. The special exhibitions had received regional press and radio coverage and national publicity in specialist journals. The Chinese textile exhibition had also been marketed through the Embroiderers' Guild. It was not clear why there had been a fall in attendances and income during this period, particularly bearing in mind the extensive in-depth publicity given to the Chinese Textiles Exhibition and the level of interest it had generated.

The report also covered improvements to security and buildings' maintenance arrangements, current conservation work and collections care, the continuing progress being made with documentation work, additions to the collections, development of information technology systems for documentation work and staff training, the development of proposals in connection with the feasibility study and liaison with the Museum volunteers.

## **I. MUSEUM - FUTURE PLANS**

Mr Pole submitted a report outlining the improvements which it was hoped to put into operation in future years. He also examined the work programme for 1996/97 although this would be subject to the approval of the budget by the Council.

## **I. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Working Party had already been arranged for 6 March 1996 at Saffron Walden Museum.

It was agreed that in future when arranging meetings of the Working Party, the first Wednesday in the month should be avoided as this clashed with another meeting which Councillor Gregory was required to attend.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

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