

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 9 OCTOBER 1997

Present:- Councillors Mrs M R Green and D M Miller (Uttlesford Members); Ms S Kirkpatrick, N B Newman and E Planterose (Museum Society representatives).

Officers in attendance:- Mrs C Allison, Mrs S McLagan and J Unwin.

I. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

It was agreed that N B Newman be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

At the opening of the meeting Mr Newman welcomed Mr E Planterose who had been appointed by the Museum Society to the vacancy on the Joint Working Party following the death of Mrs Sturge.

I. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G W Powers and A Watson.

I. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 5 June 1997 were received.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute MM4

Mr Newman confirmed that Ms S Kirkpatrick, the Secretary of the Museum Society, attended meetings of the Joint Working Party as a member. Four members from the District Council and four members from the Museum Society served on the Working Party.

(ii) Minute MM5

The Working Party considered the difficulties involved in providing adequate signing throughout Saffron Walden town centre and particularly from the main car parks to the Museum. It was noted that the Town Centre Manager and a Working Party drawing together various interests within the Town were currently giving attention to this issue with a view to advising the proper authorities on the most effective action to take.

With regard to parties of visitors to the Museum arriving by coach, it was considered that priority should be given to the establishment of a coach park at Swan Meadow car park and the provision of a waymarked trail, possibly highlighting other attractions and historical aspects of the Town, guiding people from the car park to the Museum.

Regarding Saffron Walden Castle, the Museum Curator reported arrangements currently in hand in co-operation with English Heritage to plant a blackthorn hedge around the Castle ruins to make suitable improvements in security for the safety of the public in keeping with the historic nature of the site.

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

Mr Newman reported on the previous meeting of the Museum Society. Amongst the issues discussed had been ongoing problems of the need for external lighting down the drive from the Museum and the completion of the CCTV project with the outside security camera. Planning permission had been required for both these items. These features were in hand with the Council's Property Services Manager but progress had been slow. The Working Party agreed that these features should be installed as a matter of priority.

Other issues raised included the review of insurance arrangements to take account of items stored at Newport; the desirability of upgrading the heating system to operate more efficiently; arrangements in connection with the Museum Society's investment portfolio, the need to find an alternative storage location for those items stored at Newport; the

liability of individual trustees; and the need to consider the possibility of organising the Museum Society on a different basis, perhaps as a company limited by guarantee in order to limit the liability of individuals.

I. CURATOR'S REPORT

Mrs Allison submitted a report on the operation of the Museum for the period from July to September 1997.

The Museum had reached the final short-list for the Museum of the Year Award and had been visited by the Chairman of the National Heritage Award Committee. It was expected that the final decision would be made later in October. She also referred to the Take 5 Potters exhibition which had been very successful and had attracted Arts Council/National Lottery funding, administered through the Museum Society.

The Apache Day held during September had proved successful in attracting visitors in the 16-26 age group who were notoriously difficult to attract to museums. The occasion had been the Heritage Weekend when the ethnography collection had served as the focus for the event and the highlight had been a workshop held at the Museum by a native American of the Chirucua Apache tribe which had been most successful and had generated a lot of interest. A wide range of educational activities had taken place over the summer holiday period which had been most successful. It was noted that safety regulations requiring the use of seat belts in coaches carrying children had made transport marginally more expensive for visiting school groups and consequently the number of visits by groups of school children had reduced.

With reference to work on the permanent galleries, discussions were taking place with British Airports Authority about the possibility of sponsorship in connection with the display of archaeological material excavated from the Airport site.

The Curator referred particularly to the need to find suitable long-term storage to replace the Newport store following a recent visit by the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) security advisor. The inadequacy of fire alarm monitoring at the store was a particular concern. Some of the recommendations of the MGC security advisor would be implemented this year whilst others had been included in next year's budget for approval by the District Council.

Other areas of concern were the need to maintain the impetus of data recording in order to meet the documentation requirements for MGC registration. In the absence of the Natural Sciences Officer, the Documents Assistant was currently receiving training in order to enable some of the more complex tasks to be completed. Staff were liaising with the Uttlesford Volunteer Bureau in recruiting volunteers to serve at the Museum. Volunteers fulfilled an essential role in performing some of the more routine visitor services and supervisory functions and thereby provided useful support enabling professional officers to direct their attention to priority conservation, curatorial and development work.

In connection with the staging of the temporary special exhibitions, Mr Newman requested that the Curator should produce a financial report on the operation of the exhibitions to make clear the cash flow and trading arrangements involved. The Head of Leisure and Amenities said that the Curator was responsible for the management of all aspects of the Museum on a day to day basis and was subject to the District Council's financial and budgetary and audit requirements. Sufficient information was made available to meet those requirements and it was therefore unnecessary for the Curator to spend any more of her time on preparing financial management information.

The Working Party thanked the Museum Curator for producing a full and comprehensive report and congratulated her on the successful events which had been held during the summer and on achieving selection to the short-list in connection with the Museum of the Year Award.

I. SERVICE REVIEW AND FORWARD PLAN

The Working Party received the Museum Service Review and Forward Plan for the period 1997-2000.

RECOMMENDED that the Amenities Sub-Committee approve and adopt the report, as set out, including recommendations 1, 2(a) and 2(b).

The Head of Leisure and Amenities thanked members of the Working Party for their support and added that the approval of the recommendations by the Council was most important in achieving the aims of registration with the Museums and Galleries Commission and establishing a community based museum service.

I. FEES AND CHARGES

The Working Party received a table setting out the scale of fees and charges at the Museum together with proposed changes and explaining the basis of the charge. The proposed scale of fees and charges would be presented to the next Community Services Committee in November for approval.

I. DRAFT BUDGET

The draft budget for 1998/99 was submitted for information. It was noted that the budget figures would be submitted to the next meeting of the Amenities Sub-Committee together with the budgets for other services administered by that Sub-Committee as part of the Council's budget making process.

The meeting ended at 9.45 pm.

\D051