

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM on 13 AUGUST 1998

Present:- Councillors J Hurwitz, Mrs J E Menell and D M Miller (Uttlesford Members), N B Newman, E Planterose and A Watson (Museum Society).

Officers in attendance:- Mrs C Allison and M T Purkiss.

I. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

It was agreed that Councillor Mrs J E Menell be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

I. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ms S Kirkpatrick and Councillor G W Powers.

I. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting held on 28 April 1998 were received.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Curator's House

Mr Newman reported that he had met with the architect acting on behalf of the owner of the neighbouring property. However, the matter had still not been resolved but it was understood that the matter was still in hand. Mr Newman wished to place on record his concern at the condition of the property including the lean-to structure.

(ii) Members' Workshop

The Curator reported it was planned to offer Members who had not already had a "hands on" visit to the Museum the opportunity to attend a Workshop in September or October 1998. A report on capping was being prepared and would be presented to a special meeting of the Working Party. In relation to this matter, it was noted that a large proportion of the Museum's budget was not within the direct control of the Curator.

(iii) Archaeological Collections

In response to a question from Mr Newman, the Curator reported that James Everett's contract had now finished and during his time with the Museum he had undertaken an inventory and computerised several thousand objects from the archaeological collection.

(iv) Security Arrangements

The Curator reported that the Fire Brigade had recently attended an incident at the Museum. However, the large fire engine could not gain access to the Museum due to the number of cars parked around the access gates. The matter had been considered by the Council's Risk Management Team. Yellow boxes in Museum Street were already planned, but had been delayed because of the Resident Parking Scheme. It was understood that when the alarm had gone off at the Museum, there had been a school party in the building and the evacuation procedures had worked extremely well. The Risk Management Team had also looked at the problem of children in the Museum grounds and a new sign warning drivers of the presence of young children would be erected along the driveway.

The Curator reported that a further meeting would be held with the Fire Brigade to discuss this incident and the question of locking the gates at the Museum would also be discussed. It was understood that some doubt had been expressed as to whether it was legally possible for the gates to be locked. This matter would be considered by the Council's Head of Legal Services. Mr Newman reported that a further problem was caused

by people bringing dogs into the Museum grounds and allowing them to foul the grassed areas and the Curator agreed to ask the Council's Animal Warden to look into this situation.

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

Mr Newman reported on the meeting of the Museum Society held on 16 July 1998. He reported that the new Treasurer had been presented to the Committee and since that time a meeting had been held with Mr Plumb and the books and other documents had been handed over. The Accounts had now been audited and he was particularly pleased that the value of the investments had risen by 37%.

Mr Newman considered that it was necessary to make Members aware of the impact which the Society made. As an example he referred to the work of Julia Bazeley on ceramics. She had undertaken 176 hours on this project and the Society had contributed £1,073 towards this.

The Curator had been looking at other sources of funding and had made an approach for possible grant assistance from the Millennium Fund. An outline proposal had been submitted in relation to the Ceramics Gallery for a grant of £30,000.

At the Society's meeting, further concern had been expressed at the situation at the Curator's house and reference had also been made to a problem concerning a request from Charles Stanley and Co. Concern had also been expressed at the Council's decision to cap the Museum's budget. The Society considered that the value of the volunteers needed to be highlighted and Mr Planterose had prepared a paper which illustrated the value, in financial terms, of the work which was contributed by the volunteers. A summary of the paper is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.

Councillor Miller stated that the Museum had won three major awards in one year and should receive the Council's full support.

Mr Newman also circulated an audited report on attendances at the Museum and this is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes. Also attached is a copy of the accounts of the Museum Society.

Mr Newman also referred to some points which had been raised by Ms Kirkpatrick. In particular, she had referred to the funding which might be available from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. However, the Curator stated that the bulk of the £9 million was going to the National Museums, but she would keep the matter under review. In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Menell, the Curator stated that she had looked at funding from the EC, but this was extremely difficult as it was project based funding and required working with partners in other countries.

Mr Newman also referred to recent problems involving the Museum Society post being opened and the printing of the Annual Report. This matter was left with the Curator. However, Mr Watson suggested that the Museum Society mail did not need to be directed to the Museum and that the letter head could have a correspondence address added.

I. CURATOR'S REPORT

Mrs Allison submitted a report on the Museum's activities for the period April to June 1998. She stated that this had been a very successful three month period and the Museum had been delighted to accept an Uttlesford Access Group Award for the provision of facilities for people with disabilities. She reported on the Edward Bawden, 'Designs on Life', exhibition which had run until 7 June. The summer exhibition, 'Falling Apart at the Seams' had now opened and two pieces of the Myddylton Place Tapestry were on display. The exhibition would run from 11 June to 1 November 1998 and a grant of £300 had been received from the Daphne Bullard Trust for costume conservation.

The Curator reported on the events which had been held at the Museum and added that preparation was in hand for the Castle Heritage Day in September when there would be archery in the grounds.

She reported on the gallery maintenance programme which had been agreed. It was noted that the application for sponsorship from BAA to help fund the display of the Stansted finds from the Airport had been refused on the grounds that part of the Community Projects budget had been reallocated to youth initiatives.

This request had been under consideration for over a year and the matter had now been passed to the Corporate Director - Development to pursue further.

The Curator reported that school visits had continued to be successful with the Ancient Egyptians still featuring heavily in the Education Officer's teaching sessions. The Museum had also attracted visits from special needs groups which had proved very successful. This was an important part of the Museum's work, providing access and support to people of all abilities and ages. She reported that a further 'Reminiscence workshop' had been offered to carers in liaison with Paragon Trainers, with additional workshops arranged for later in the year. The Curator had also received a letter from Help the Aged who had become aware of the Museum's work and had asked for it to become involved in the United Nations Day for Older People on 1 October 1998. She also reported that three Saturday workshops were planned in association with Cambridge University at Madingley Hall. In addition, evening classes would be starting in January 1999 and the subject would be Britain under the Romans and the Stuarts.

The Curator reported that professional visitors to the Museum had included Val King from the Museum and Galleries Commission with a view to the Museum hosting a conservation intern for a 12 month placement. Following this visit a one year internship had been agreed for Heather Southern from 5 October 1998 and this would be at no cost to the Museum.

It was noted that at the recent Risk Management Group Meeting the Curator had raised the problem of the lack of a fire detection system at the Newport Store linked to the Fire Service. The Risk Management Group had decided that this matter merited further investigation.

In relation to management issues, the Curator stated that a report had been presented to the Corporate Director - Finance regarding the problems foreseen in the introduction of an electronic till. His decision had been that a till must be introduced. However, he expressed a willingness to meet with volunteers and this would take place in September in the Museum. It was also noted that following the outreach work from the Museum, the Ashdon Museum Society had now achieved charitable status.

The Working Party thanked the Curator for her report and placed on record its thanks to her for all the work which had been achieved by the Museum staff.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

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