

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at SAFFRON
WALDEN MUSEUM on 21 JANUARY 1999**

Present:- Councillors Mrs J E Menell, D M Miller and G W Powers - Uttlesford Members; Ms S Kirkpatrick and E Planterose - Museum Society representatives

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

I. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Hurwitz, N B Newman and A Watson.

I. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

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

I. **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The notes of the meeting held on 13 August and of the Special Meeting held on 17 November 1998 were received.

I. **BUSINESS ARISING**

(i) **Curator's House**

In response to questions from Members the Curator stated that she understood that the works to 40 Castle Street would commence in the forthcoming financial year. She understood that extensive works were required and it might be necessary for her to be relocated temporarily.

RECOMMENDED that the Property Services Manager be asked to provide a timetable for the works as soon as possible.

(ii) **Members' Workshop**

It was considered that the Members' Workshop should be held after the elections in May 1999.

(iii) **Security Arrangements**

It was noted that legal advice had been received that the gates at the Museum could be locked overnight. The Curator felt that it was sensible to start with locking the far gate and to assess what impact this had. She had also spoken to the Animal Warden concerning the problem of dog fouling and an appropriate sign was being prepared.

(iv) **Consequences of Capping**

The Curator thanked the Members for the support which they had given in setting a financial framework for the future of the Museum.

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

In the absence of Mr Newman, Ms Kirkpatrick gave a brief report on the matters discussed at the last meeting of the Museum Society. Most of the items had already been discussed at this meeting, including access, dogs and the works to the Curator's house. Discussion had also taken place on progress with the work being carried out to the windows. Councillor Powers also referred to the problems with the drain pipes and guttering at the School House and was informed that these matters had now been resolved.

I. **CURATOR'S REPORT**

Mrs Allison submitted a report on the Museum's activities for the period from October to mid-December 1998. The summer exhibition "Falling Apart At The Seams" had ended on 1 November and the winter exhibition "Feasting and Fasting" had opened on 28 November and would continue until 7 March 1999. Preparations were already in hand for the spring exhibition based on the natural history collections entitled "Jaws, Claws and Paws". The Museum had undertaken a one day exhibition in St Mary's Church at the request of Age Concern as part of the United Nations Day of Older People on 1 October 1998. A special event had been organised to accompany the "Feasting and Fasting"

exhibition. "A Feast of Flowers" had displayed over 50 varied arrangements around the Museum during the weekend of 11-13 December. During the event weekend the Museum had had around 300 extra visitors. The Museum had received good publicity and been featured in all the local newspapers and on BBC Look East. The Museum had also featured on Countryfile and would be included in a future edition of Out to Lunch with Brian Turner.

It was noted that a gallery maintenance programme had been agreed and improvements would be made to lighting in the Ethnography gallery. The Curator and Visitor Services Officer had submitted a bid to the Millennium Festival Fund for a grant towards the redisplay of the ceramics gallery. The outcome of the submission would not be known until February.

The Autumn term had been as busy as ever for the Education Officer. A number of holiday activities had been organised during the half-term and Christmas holiday periods and a "drop-in" family session had been arranged on a Sunday afternoon. Work was well in hand for the 1999 science engineering and technology week. Talks to adult groups had continued and the outreach service was looking at developing relations with mothers and toddlers.

An EVAC chair had been purchased. This would facilitate egress from the building in the event of lift failure or other emergency.

Despite all the school sessions being fully booked in October, the number of children visiting in October had been lower than expected. It had been found that many schools were choosing to spread their visits over several days rather than bring the 90 plus children on one day, which had been happening last year. The importance of school visits to shop income had been demonstrated by the overall reduction in school children visiting in October with the consequent reduction in shop income. However, visits from the general public had improved and the flower festival had raised December's figures by 50%.

The long awaited window repair programme had continued. Redecoration of the entrance hall and varnishing of the floor had been completed in November. The Museum had been closed to the public on Sunday 8 November when the floor had been varnished. The statue and other heavy objects had been moved with the assistance of the painters and the Royal Engineers from Carver Barracks. The linking of the school room/lab fire alarm into the 24 hour monitoring service had been investigated. This would alert the fire brigade automatically in the event of a fire in these areas rather than the current audible alarm. The Risk Management Group was looking at having the whole of the Newport site linked to the alarm system.

A pest infestation of biscuit beetle had been found in the natural history store. The matter was being investigated by the Conservation Officer in association with Council officers and Rentokil. It was essential that the problem was resolved by April when larvae hatch. However, there would be cost implications.

In relation to the introduction of an electronic till it was noted that the Leader of the Council had met with the volunteers in the Museum on 30 September 1998. During this meeting it had been suggested that 3 volunteers form a small committee to progress the matter. A meeting had been held between this Committee, the Chief Executive and other officers on 18 December and as a result it had been agreed that a check list of the procedural requirements of a till would be produced and that the committee and relevant officers would view electronic tills in other museums which utilised the services of volunteers to administer the shop and reception areas. It was understood that the first visit would be to Bury St Edmunds. The Curator stated that one of the main problems was the time available for the appropriate member of staff to deal with the reconciliation of takings at the end of the day.

It was noted that Julia Bazley had started maternity leave on 11 September 1998 and her son, William, had been born on 13 October. She would return to work on 1 April 1999. The exhibition/access to collections aspects of her post were being covered by Sue Miller, previously employed at the Museum on a part-time basis from October to March. Heather Southorn had joined the Museum staff on 5 October as the Museum and Galleries Commission Sponsored Conservation Intern.

Councillor Powers thanked the Curator for her report and asked what scope there was for tapping into other sources of funding. The Curator stated that European funding was based on projects and did not have an element of revenue funding. It was also necessary to coordinate with museums from two other countries. She would be attending a seminar in April to assess the current situation in relation to European funding. She was also considering the possibility of linking in with educational establishments who find it easier to access European funding. She also referred to the work of the Association for Business Sponsorship in the Arts which provided guidance in fundraising and sponsorship and would obtain more information from this organisation.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm