

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 27 MAY 1999

Present:- Councillors Mrs J E Menell and G W Powers - Uttlesford Members; Ms S Kirkpatrick and N B Newman - Museum Society Representatives.

Also Present:- M Adams - Museum Society.

Officers in Attendance:- Mrs S McLagan and M T Purkiss.

I. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D M Miller and R C Smith and Messrs E Planterose and A Watson.

It was also noted that Mrs C Allison could not be present due to a family bereavement and members asked that their condolences be passed on to her.

I. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 21 January 1999 were received.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Curator's House

In response to a question the Head of Community & Leisure Services reported that the Curator had been provided with a timetable and arrangements for the work which it was understood would be carried out during June. She agreed to provide details of the work to Mr Newman.

(ii) Security Arrangements

It was understood that work was currently in hand and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

(iii) Consequences of Capping

The Head of Community and Leisure Services reported that whilst the Museum budget had not been capped there was no provision for growth. Museum staff were continuing to be prudent and it was understood that there were no current concerns.

(iv) School Room

In response to a question from Mr Newman the Head of Community & Leisure Services agreed to arrange for the Council's Property Services Manager to discuss with him the arrangements for the repairs and the materials being used at the School Room.

(v) Museums in Essex Committee

Councillor Powers reported that he was no longer the Council's representative on this organisation. He had been replaced by Councillor R J O'Neill and it was agreed that Councillor O'Neill should be invited to sit in on future meetings of the Joint Working Party.

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

Mr Newman reported on the matters discussed at the last meeting of the Museum Society. He added that the AGM would be at the Museum at 8.00 pm on 24 June 1999. The Society's accounts had been virtually completed and would be submitted for auditing and it was hoped that they would be ready for the AGM. He also reported that Mr E Planterose was helping out with Secretary's duties during the Secretary's period of maternity leave.

Mr Newman expressed particular concern at a recent incident at the Museum involving a number of youths. He suggested that investigations should be carried out into providing a panic button or bleeper on the main desk and the Head of Community & Leisure Services agreed to discuss this matter further with the Curator.

Mr Newman reported that investigations were being carried out into providing a photographic record of historic properties within the town.

Ms Kirkpatrick added that the Museum had hosted a meeting of the Uttlesford Recorders who were looking at similar projects in the villages.

Mr Newman stated that he was very pleased with recent coverage on TV and radio and the level of free publicity for the Museum continued to be excellent. Special exhibitions had gone very well and there had been some excellent lectures. Plans were also in hand to revamp the Ceramics Gallery.

Mr Newman expressed some concern at the condition of the boiler and hoped that any new boiler installed would be converted to gas. The Head of Community & Leisure Services reported that the provision of the electronic till was still under investigation. Mr Newman felt that better use could be made of the sales area to help increase income. However, he was aware of the limited space available and the lack of capital funds in the short term. He hoped that the general concept would be looked at in the forthcoming Leisure Strategy.

It was hoped that a Members' Workshop would be arranged at the Museum later in the year and it was also suggested that the mentors for new Members should arrange for them to visit the Museum. In response to a question the Head of Community & Leisure Services explained the problems which had been experienced with the removal of the thatch and added that options for its replacement were being investigated.

Mr Newman reported that there had been some concern at subscription levels and a computerised system was being looked at. He added that a number of documents had been retrieved from Barclays Bank and were now being stored in the Museum safe. He suggested that a copy of the Museum's Memorandum of Agreement should be circulated to all Members.

I. CURATOR'S REPORT

The Working Party considered the Curator's report for the period from mid December 1998 to mid March 1999. The winter exhibition "Feasting and Fasting" had proved successful and the special event "A Feast of Flowers" had attracted more visitors at a quiet time of year for the Museum. Once again, the Education Officer had organised an activity for SET (Science, Engineering and Technology week) and on this occasion had worked with Three Valleys Water to create a highly successful day on 13 March called "Waterworks". The summer exhibition, "Jaws, Claws & Paws" had opened on 20 March curated by Sarah Kenyon and the special activity on the opening day had been "Spiders and Snakes Alive!". Television crews had filmed frequently in the Museum over the last quarter.

It was particularly noted that £500 had been received from the Saffron Walden Herts & Essex Building Society towards the Museum's EVAC chair. Also, there had been a suggestion that in the year 2000 free entrance tickets to the Museum should be made available across the District. The Working Party endorsed this idea.

In relation to the Dunmow Museum project, Councillor Powers reported that confirmation of charitable status was awaited and an application for grant funding had been submitted to Uttlesford District Council. The Head of Community & Leisure Services reported that the Museum staff had been under great pressure leading up to the special exhibitions and she congratulated them on their achievements.

The Committee and Public Relations Manager reported that there was now improved liaison between the Council's publicity services and the Museum's activities and arrangements were in hand to print and circulate 20,000 bookmarks advertising the Museum and the Council's website.

The Head of Community & Leisure Services reported that from 1 April 1999 the Government had changed the status of schools from Locally Managed and Grant Maintained to Foundation Schools. This would create a situation with the fee that was charged for organised school visits where there was currently a differential rate between the two different types of schools and a new charge would need to be agreed.

RECOMMENDED that a maximum charge of £2 per head be agreed for organised school visits with a minimum of forty students and that arrangements for charges for smaller groups be investigated further.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm