

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 5.00 pm at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM on 31 AUGUST 2000

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

Officers in attendance:- M T Purkiss and Ms C Wingfield

MM7 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs S V Schneider, Mrs S McLagan and A Watson.

MM8 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 25 May 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM9 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute MM3(ii) - Museum Till

In response to a question from Councillor Powers it was reported that volunteers had visited the Tourist Information Centre and had been given the opportunity to use the till at those premises. Most volunteers were reasonably satisfied with the operation of the till and the necessary work for the installation of an electronic till at the Museum had been costed and an order would be placed once Finance had agreed to authorise the expenditure. When the till had been installed there would need to be a trial period and it was anticipated that the system would be in full use from 1 April 2001.

ii) 40 Castle Street Saffron Walden

Mr Newman explained the background to the new lease of this property and thanked the staff of the Council's Legal Section for their valuable assistance in this matter.

MM10 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mr Newman had been unable to attend the AGM of the Museum Society Management Committee and Mr Planterose gave a brief report on the items dealt with at that meeting. At the previous AGM there had been discussion on the future priorities for the Museum and the need for an enhanced school and meeting room had been identified. However, it was now considered that improved and enlarged storage and more space for displaying objects were a much higher priority. Currently, there was no further space for storage and the facilities at Newport were not entirely satisfactory. Members of the Working Party put forward suggestions for alternative storage arrangements which could be investigated. Mr Newman also felt that the archaeology gallery should be revamped and space made to accommodate the archaeological finds from the excavations at Stansted Airport.

Councillor Powers added that it was important that the Council did not lose sight of the recommendations which had been included within the Consultants report in 1995 and he hoped that it might be possible to put together a bid for lottery or other funding in future years. The Curator said that the Eastern Region was perceived as being under funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and it might be an opportune time to consider preparing a bid.

The Curator reported that she was currently preparing a three year strategic plan which would form a basis for further discussion concerning the development and improvement of the Museum service.

MM11 CURATOR'S REPORT

The Working Party considered the Curator's report for the period April-June 2000.

It was noted from the report that the Museum would be reviewed in year three (2002/03) of the Best Value Programme. However, Councillor Powers drew attention to an item on the agenda for the Amenities Sub-Committee meeting on 7 September 2000. This item referred to meetings of the Budget Strategy group which had suggested that the Museum should be identified as an area for savings in 2001/02. Councillor Powers was concerned that once again the Museum was being asked to reduce expenditure. He considered that whilst a situation of no-growth might be appropriate in the short term it would not be acceptable to make cuts in this valuable service.

The Curator's report then dealt with items concerning the Museum buildings and site. In answer to a question from Mr Newman it was confirmed that provision had been made for gutter clearances to be undertaken twice each year. Mr Newman also referred to the land adjoining 50 Castle Street and felt that it could be appropriate to review the income received for the letting of this plot.

The report then looked at issues relating to collections and research and particular attention was drawn to a loan of aboriginal clubs to the National Museum of Australia. This would be a prestigious loan and would provide good publicity for the Museum.

In relation to displays and visitor services, attention was drawn to the Pow Wow and Museum's 165th Birthday which had been very successful and had attracted over 1500 visitors with good media coverage. However, Mr Newman said that he would like to see the Museum obtain income from similar events in the future.

Members were given details of the education programmes and noted that these were running at full capacity during term time. Members were also pleased to note that the story telling sessions which had been held during August had been fully subscribed. It was noted that future events included Civic Trust open days (free entry) on 16 & 17 September, The Big Draw on 21 October and Dinosaur Day on 25 October 2000.

The meeting ended at 6.15 pm