

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 6.30pm at
SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM on 15 OCTOBER 2001**

Present:- Councillors M A Hibbs and A R Row (Uttlesford Members);
Ms S Kirkpatrick, Mr N B Newman, Mr E Planterose and
Mr A Watson (Museum Society representatives).

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

MM9 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

It was agreed that Councillor A R Row be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

MM10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J E Menell and D M Miller

MM11 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting held on 21 May 2001 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM12 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute MM4(ii) – Church Street entrance

In response to a question from Mr Planterose the Committee and Communications Manager explained that the Property Services Manager had arranged for the Church Street entrance to be inspected and did not consider that there was a Health and Safety issue. However, Mr Planterose still felt that this entrance was dangerous and asked that a further inspection be carried out.

(ii) Minute MM6 - “2 for 1” Promotion

The Curator reported that take up of the East Anglia Tourism Initiative “2 for 1” had been poor. However, the promotion had been at no cost to the Museum

MM13 REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mr Newman reported on the sad death of Malcolm Adams and paid tribute to the considerable amount of work he had undertaken, not only as Museum Society Treasurer and a Desk Volunteer, but in assisting with cash and financial matters generally. He suggested that it would be appropriate to plant a tree or a shrub area in the Museum grounds to commemorate his work and the advice of the Council’s Landscape Officer would be sought.

Mr Newman reported that the Charity Commission's Annual Return had been completed and arrangements were in hand for the appointment of a new Treasurer. A donation of £400 had been received from The Gibson Walden fund. It was noted that an approach had been made by Mike Hibbs Architects for the use of the Museum for a reception. The Society considered that this type of function would be useful in promoting the Museum. The Working Party supported the initiative subject to satisfactory stewarding and security arrangements being made.

(Councillor Hibbs declared an interest in the above matter and took no part in the discussion thereon.)

MM14

CURATOR'S REPORT

The Working Party received the Curator's quarterly reports for the periods April – June and July – September 2001. In relation to the strategic plan, the Curator reported that the search for a replacement building for the Newport Store was continuing. The possibility of premises near the Airport was being explored with BAA and a further site near Little Walden was also being investigated. Mr Newman referred to the new store which had recently been built by the Museum of Rural Life at Stowmarket and the Curator agreed to obtain further details of this project.

The legal and technical issues regarding the electronic till had now been resolved and the completion of the staff's work was anticipated by Christmas and the training of volunteers in the New Year.

The Curator reported that there had been problems with the network computer and printer in the Museum work room. However, pressure on IT staff had resulted in difficulties in obtaining a prompt response to these problems. Officers would investigate whether there would be a reduction in IT charges to reflect this level of service.

The Curator reported that a recent meeting with the Property Services section had resulted in the confirmation of a programme of maintenance and other work required to the Museum. These included a request to clear gutters and down pipes on the main building three times between autumn and early spring and to complete work on the furniture gallery area by Christmas. Mr Newman requested that the Property Services section should inspect the Museum on a monthly basis throughout the winter in relation to leaf fall problems.

Councillor Hibbs referred to the age and the condition of the oil fired boilers at the Museum. It was emphasised that if a breakdown occurred during winter the Museum might well have to be closed to the public and damage could occur to some exhibits. Councillor Hibbs asked that the Property Services section be asked to inspect the condition of the boilers and prepare a report on the condition and the likely cost of replacement gas fired boilers.

Work on the main roof to 40 Castle Street was planned for this financial year and would be put out to tender shortly. A formal request had been placed with the Environmental Services Section regarding the trees surrounding the Museum building to be lopped, and in some cases taken down. These included a number of trees at the rear of the Museum which were encroaching

on the building and fire escapes and which contributed to the problems caused by leaves blocking gutters.

In relation to the grounds the Working Party asked that Officers review the lease and rent paid by the owner of 50 Castle Street regarding a parcel of land which was owned by the Museum Society and leased to the Council.

The total number of visitors for the period July – September 2001 was slightly up on the previous year due mainly to a large increase in the number of school visits. However, there had been a noticeable drop in the number of overseas visitors this summer, in common with experience at many other Museums and attractions. The “Saffron on Show” had been particularly successful and 5000 Crocus Corms had been sold.

The Working Party noted the recent events which had been held at the Museum and the outreach activities which had been undertaken.

The Working Party has particularly pleased with the support which had been given to other Museums and local groups as set out below;

- Ashdon Village Museum AGM (Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery Society – committee meeting (Curator)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford) Committee - committee meeting, field meeting and information on potential speakers for 2002 programme (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Local Agenda 21 Farming, Wildlife & Countryside Group – group meeting , bird survey for 2002, preparation for Forum meeting, group response to Stansted Airport planning application (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Botany Group – information relating to nature conservation issues (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges Committee – verge report and records, Verge Representatives meeting, comments on Highways policy (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working Group – information for UDC Community Strategy (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Saffron Walden Searchers Metal Detector Club (Curator). Members of the Club have kindly agreed to loan a selection of their local finds for display in the Museum for the ‘Find Yourself at the Museum’ event on 13 October.

The meeting ended at 8:00pm