

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP held at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 7.30 pm on 4 MARCH 2004

Present:- Councillors D J Morson and V Pedder (Uttlesford Members)
N B Newman and E Planterose (Museum Society representatives)

Also present:- Councillor R P Chambers.

Officers in attendance:- S McLagan, M T Purkiss and C Wingfield.

MM1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was agreed that Councillor D J Morson be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

MM2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A R Row and G Sell and A Watson and S Hollingworth.

MM3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2003 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM4 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mr Newman reported that since the Best Value Review, the Museum Society had moved forward and had taken on board the recommendations of the Best Value Group. It was looking at ways of promoting the Museum further and had introduced a newsletter, gift vouchers and was looking at a new logo. The Chairman requested that Mr Newman provide a report against each of the actions in the Best Value Action Plan to demonstrate progress to the Task Group at its next meeting at the end of May.

He said that it was unfortunate that no meetings of the Task Group had been held since February 2003 due to the delay in finalising the agreement between the Council and the Museum Society. The Head of Community and Leisure accepted that there had been a delay in finalising the agreement, but it was now nearing completion with only minor details to be agreed. She said that Mr Watson had been kept fully informed of progress with the agreement and the Curator had kept the Society advised of progress and she had been able to take any decisions that were required during the interregnum. She passed copies of the revised draft to Mr Newman and Mr Planterose and they would arrange for this to be discussed and passed to the Council's Head of Legal Services once it had been agreed.

Mr Newman said that there were still concerns about the Newport Store and Councillor Morson said that a meeting had been arranged for 7 April where options would be considered and he asked that if the Society had any further suggestions they should be fed into this meeting. Mr Newman also mentioned that there had been further problems with the flow of water from the Museum roof and the Curator said that this had been due to problems with a down pipe which had now been resolved. He said that since the last meeting the Museum Society had approved loans out to the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter and the Cambridgeshire County Record Office and the Task Group gave approval to these.

Mr Newman also referred to a letter he had received from the Council's Head of Legal Services concerning the attendance of Museum Society representatives at the Community and Leisure Committee. The Committee and Communications Manager clarified that the Society representatives still had the right to attend and to speak at meetings of this Committee with the consent of the Chairman and these rights had been extended to other groups within the District.

MM5

CURATOR'S REPORT

The Task Group received the Curator's quarterly report for the period October – December 2003. She said that the Museum website was being completely redesigned and its website address was www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org. The Task Group welcomed this initiative and suggested that there should be a link with the computers in the library and considered that a desirable long term aim would be to get a computer in the Museum building.

The Task Group noted that there had been some problems with disruptive youngsters and the Police had been informed. The Curator said that the Police had advised that there should be more security staff, particularly on Sundays and she hoped to have two staff and one volunteer available on Sundays in future. Councillor Chambers suggested that she should contact the Police Community Safety Officer to discuss the arrangements in more detail.

The Curator referred to recent acquisitions and circulated a 13th Century silver gilt ring from Clavering.

It was noted that visitor numbers remained fairly stable and the Task Group noted the events which had been held at the Museum and the future programme of exhibitions and events. Councillors Morson and Chambers congratulated the Curator on the excellent programme of exhibitions and events and thanked her and the Museum staff for all their hard work.

MM6

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Curator reported on progress with the following projects:

Resource Centre Project 2004-08
Ceramics Gallery 2004

Long term plans to develop the Museum building

It was noted that the Resource Centre project was dependent on a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and it was noted that it was vital to prepare a sound business plan. Councillor Morson said that he was pleased to see that the Museum Society were examining how they could best make a contribution and would also be involved in fund raising for the ceramics gallery.

Mr Planterose suggested that signing to the Museum needed to be improved and Councillor Morson said that this was already being looked at.

MM7 50 CASTLE STREET – RENT OF REAR GARDEN

At a previous meeting of the Museum Management Joint Working Party, the Council had been asked to undertake a review of the rent for the parcel of land at 50 Castle Street. The Task Group were made aware of the current arrangements and the value of the land and the suggested revised rent levels. It was suggested that two options should be put to the lessee, and he be asked to respond by the next meeting of the Task Group in May.

MM8 ESSEX INHERITANCE – A STRATEGY FOR THE COUNTY OF ESSEX

Copies of a document entitled Essex Inheritance – A Heritage Strategy for the County of Essex 2004-07 was circulated. It was noted that this had been adopted by the Assembly of Essex Heritage Stakeholders on behalf of the organisations they represented. The Curator said that it was a statement of support for heritage and there was no commitment to expenditure or policy. She drew attention to a statement in the document which referred to best practice on the preservation and recording of objects and archives and said that this could support the proposal for a resource centre.

The Task Group endorsed the Strategy.

MM9 FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 20 May 2004 at the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden.

Councillor Morson said that he and Councillor Sell had met with Museum staff and following their meeting a further visit had been arranged for Council Members to the Museum on 16 March 2004.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.