

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 8.00 pm on 20 MAY 2004**

Present:- Councillors R P Chambers, J I Loughlin, D J Morson and
V Pedder (Uttlesford Members); N B Newman, E Planterose and
A Watson (Museum Society representatives).

Also present:- Councillor S V Schneider.

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

MM1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was agreed that Mr N B Newman be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

MM2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM3 REPORT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Mr Newman reported that the AGM of the Society would be held on 3 June 2004.

He said that he considered there was a need to strengthen both the Council and the Society's position to get more from the Best Value Review. He said that in view of the uncertainty of the long term commitment of the Council to the Museum Service he felt unable to recommend to the Society that they made any financial contribution to the Resource Centre Project.

However, Councillor Morson gave an assurance that the Council was committed to the future of the Museum and Councillor Chambers suggested that Mr Newman and Mr Watson should meet with the Chief Executive and Councillor Morson to discuss these issues further and agree a way forward.

Mr Watson said that the Museum Society was a charity and its funds had to be dealt with in accordance with the constitution. If the Society were to donate money to the Resource Centre which would be located in a building owned by the Council it would need certain assurances about the future of the building.

The Task Group then reviewed progress with the actions arising from the Best Value Review and, in particular, it was noted that there was a need to discuss issues around admissions, particularly renewals of annual membership and this would be considered at the next meeting. It was noted that two corporate hospitality events had been held and the Saffron Walden Initiative were interested in holding further business meetings at the Museum.

Mr Newman then reported on work which had been taken to restructure the business side of the Society and efforts which had been made to increase membership. He reported that the Society had been able to purchase several items of local interest to add to the collection, including the Radwinter Warrior, the Clavering Ring and the "Thor's Hammer" Viking Pendant. He said that the Society would have a heavy financial burden in the next few years and funds must be found from sources other than acquisitions and display. He expressed thanks to all members of staff and volunteers under the leadership of the Curator and to the officers and Museum Society members.

MM4 CURATOR'S REPORT

The Task Group received the Curator's quarterly report for the period January – March 2004.

In particular, it was noted that the acquisitions this quarter included a 20th Century style dolls' house being used in the educational programme and a 12th Century silver gilt ring from Clavering purchased by the Museum Society with a grant from the Resource/V&A Purchase Grant Fund. The Task Group noted the events which had been held at the Museum and the future programme of events and projects. Councillor Morson congratulated the Curator and her staff for the variety and frequency of these events.

MM5 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 7 and 9 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

MM6 REPATRIATION REQUEST FROM TE PAPA TONGAREWA

The Task Group considered a request from Te Papa Tongarewa (Museum of New Zealand) which had recently been mandated by the New Zealand Government to research and potentially repatriate ancestral remains held in museums in the UK.

The request was in respect of two Toi moko which had been acquired by the Museum in 1836. It was reported that the ethical and cultural considerations argued strongly in favour of repatriating the Toi moko and these had not contributed significantly to the research and educational role of the Museum. It was noted that guidance to UK museums excluded the use of long term loans as this was an inappropriate way of dealing with repatriation requests.

It was also noted that the Museum Society had agreed in principle to the request.

RECOMMENDED that the Community and Leisure Committee agree in principle to Te Papa's request to repatriate the two Toi moko.

MM7

GARDEN AT REAR OF 50 CASTLE STREET SAFFRON WALDEN

The Task Group considered a report on progress that had been made concerning land at the rear of 50 Castle Street which was owned by the Museum Society and formed part of the overall lease of the Museum to the Council. The Task Group were also informed of discussions which had been held which had concluded that the part of the garden closest to the Museum should be retained as it provided the Museum with the potential for development and that the land closest to 50 Castle Street could be sold as garden land.

RECOMMENDED that subject to agreement as to the consideration payable, the Community and Leisure Committee agree to the sale of part of the garden to the tenant of 50 Castle Street and, in default of agreement, for negotiations to be entered into for an increased rent.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.