

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP held at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 5.30 pm on 7 FEBRUARY 2005**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.  
Councillors R P Chambers and V Pedder (Uttlesford Members),  
D Laing, D Haylock and E Planterose (Museum Society  
representatives).

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

**MM26 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J I Loughlin and Mr A Watson.

**MM27 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**MM28 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute MM20(ii) – Signage**

Councillor Morson said that signage to the Museum was being looked at with an overall package to improve signage for tourist attractions in the district.

**(ii) Minute MM20(iii) – Best Value Update**

Councillors Morson and Pedder agreed to meet with Mr Laing and Mr Planterose at 5.30 pm on Monday, 28 February, to discuss progress with the Best Value Review Museum Society Action Plan.

**(iii) Minute MM20(iv) – Security**

The Curator said that the installation of the panic button system would be dealt with at the same time as the CCTV installation.

**(iv) Minute MM21 – Museum Resource Centre Project**

Councillor Morson said that the Resource Centre Project Team were optimistic about the way forward and he would update Members later in the meeting.

He said that he would shortly be making arrangements to discuss with health officers the possible impact on the storage area at Newport of any future work on the River Cam by the Environment Agency.

MM29

**UPDATE ON MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT**

Councillor Morson updated the Task Group on progress with the Museum Resource Centre Project. He said that the Project Team had been expanded to include Councillors Hughes and Jones and regular meetings had been held over the past few months.

He said that ABL Cultural Consulting had been engaged to undertake work on the audience development survey and to look at ways of improving the marketing of the Museum. He said that at the last meeting of the Project Team unanimous support had been given to the appointment of a fundraiser to be financed from the £30,000 sum allocated by the Resources Committee. He said that it was hoped to appoint a fundraiser on a six months contract to:

- raise funds to enable a second bid to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund
- advise on ways in which the £6,500 allocated by the Community Services Committee could be most effectively used
- draw up a marketing plan in conjunction with the Curator and Visitor Services Officer.
- liaise with the Museum Society's fundraiser.

He said that he had also approached Stansted Airport Ltd to discuss the possibility of them providing some staff resources to assist in the promotion and fundraising exercise.

The Task Group expressed their full support for the appointment of a fundraiser.

MM30

**REPORT OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY**

The Task Group considered the report submitted by the Saffron Walden Museum Society. It was noted that Mr Watson had been elected Chairman of the Management Committee in place of Mr Newman and Mr Planterose had been elected Vice Chairman.

Councillor Morson said that he was pleased that the Society's new Chairman and Vice Chairman had approached the Council so quickly to give an assurance that they wished to move forward and work as a team.

Mr Planterose reported on the progress with the Society's new constitution and financial regulations and said that a fundraising group had been established under the leadership of Robert Bartlett OBE. He also reported on the recruitment campaign and said that four organisations in the town had agreed to display posters with accompanying membership application leaflets. He asked if the Council would agree to these being placed in reception areas and possibly at the leisure centres. The Council representatives agreed to this request.

It was also noted that the Society was looking at ways of celebrating the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museum Society on 12 May 2005. It was also hoped that a Napoleonic re-enactment would be held at the Museum some time in June.

It was also noted that the Management Committee had been concerned at the possible risks to the collections following reports of anti-social behaviour in the Museum. It had therefore agreed the sum of £6,000 to be made available for security equipment. The Council representatives expressed their thanks for this valuable contribution and for the work which the Society undertook.

MM31

## **CURATOR'S REPORT**

The Task Group considered the Curator's quarterly report for the period of October-December 2004.

The Curator said that ABL Cultural Consulting were hoping to run three focus groups at the Museum shortly. She also referred to the presentation which would be made by ABL at a Member Workshop on 28 February. It was noted that the Museum had been set a target of making savings of £11,000 in next year's budget. However, the vast majority of the Museum services other costs were fixed (buildings, staff, etc) and the budget for actually operating the service was £25,970. It was considered that the impact of the savings would be untenable and a meeting to discuss Museum finances had been held on 3 February and was attended by the Leader and other councillors and representatives of the Museum Society and the Curator and the Executive Managers for Environmental and Cultural Services and Finance. At this meeting the consequences of the reductions had been clearly spelt out and there appeared to be greater understanding of the impact that such reductions would have.

The Task Group was particularly pleased to note that the outstanding work of the Education Officer, Jenny Gibsone, had earned her the award of Uttlesford Staff Member of the Year at the first Annual Staff Awards ceremony.

It was noted that there had been problems with the conversion of the boilers to gas. The Curator said that in order to enable work to be carried out to the ceramics gallery it was proposed that it would close to the public in December 2005 and hopefully reopen in the late Spring of 2006.

Details of recent temporary exhibitions and future events were noted and, in particular, it was noted that approximately 500 visitors had attended the Snakes Alive event on 15 January 2005. Councillor Chambers said that he would look at the possibility of promoting the Museum through the mobile police station and Councillor Pedder said that she would also raise the issue with the Buffy Bus Association.

The Task Group expressed their thanks to the Curator and her staff for the excellent work which had been carried out.

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm.