

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 23 MAY 2005**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillor J P Murphy (Uttlesford Member); J Bullen, D Laing,
E Planterose and A Watson (Museum Society).

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

MM1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Chambers,
J I Loughlin and V Pedder.

MM2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2005 were received,
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM3 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute MM28 – Signage

Councillor Morson said that he had discussed the issue of improved signage
with officers and the Curator confirmed that proposals would be included
within the marketing strategy. Mr Planterose suggested that a sign at the
Church Street pedestrian access would be particularly useful.

(ii) MM28 – Security

The Curator reported that the CCTV system had now been installed, was easy
to use and was working well.

(iii) Minute MM28 – Museum Resource Centre Project

Councillor Morson said that the Council's Architect and Property Advisor had
spoken to the Environment Agency concerning the possibility of any future
work on the River Cam to prevent flooding at Newport. However, the Agency
had confirmed that it did not intend to undertake further work as this would
have a detrimental, knock on effect elsewhere. However, the proposed new
building would be designed to cope with flooding.

(iv) Minute MM31 – Boiler Conversion

It was noted that the conversion of the boilers to gas had been completed
successfully in March 2005.

MM4

UPDATE ON THE MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT

Councillor Morson provided a brief update on progress with the Museum Resource Centre Project. He said that Martin Shaw of MIDAS had been appointed as a consultant with a brief of attracting funding and investigating other aspects of finance. Councillor Morson had written to Lord Petre, the Lord Lieutenant of Essex and to Lord Braybrooke and both had agreed to be patrons for the project. The Curator also confirmed that Andrew Streeter, the former High Sheriff had agreed to be a patron. It was intended that the project would be launched at Audley End later in the year.

Councillor Morson said that as an alternative to the Newport site, a site at Clavering had been looked at but had been discounted, mainly due to its isolated location. It was also noted that a site in Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden had recently been suggested and an evaluation was being carried out. Councillor Morson also reported that the Reporter Group of newspapers was running a competition to suggest a name for the proposed new resource centre. A meeting had also been arranged with John Williams from BAA to discuss possible funding and Councillor Murphy suggested that an approach should also be made to the Stansted Airport Community Trust. The Curator reported that an expression of interest had been made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for funding for the resource centre as a community project within the M11 corridor.

MM5

REPORT OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY

Mr Watson presented the report of the Saffron Walden Museum Society. He reported that the proposed new constitution and rules had been approved and submitted to the Charity Commission with a view to final approval being given at the AGM on 30 June 2005. He also reported that Robert Bartlett had withdrawn from the fund raising role in relation to the ceramics gallery. He concluded that the Society had celebrated its 170th anniversary with an evening reception and preview of 'Fighting Napoleon' at the Museum on 20 May 2005. He said that the event had been well attended and some new members had been recruited.

The Task Group expressed its congratulations to the Museum Society on its anniversary.

MM6

CURATOR'S REPORT

The Task Group considered the Curator's quarterly report for the period from January – March 2005. She updated Members on progress with identifying savings of £11,000 and said that priority was being given to marketing and income generation. She added that the insurance arrangements for the Museum had been reviewed and had been transferred to AXA's fine arts and museum policy.

In relation to staffing, she reported that a member of staff had been on extended sick leave and another member of staff would be on maternity leave from September. It was noted that this would have an impact on school

bookings although cover was being provided for summer activities. She reported that recent temporary exhibitions including “All Creatures Small” and “Small Things Considered” had been particularly successful and visitor numbers, shop takings and ticket sales were all slightly up on the same period last year.

The Task Group thanked the Curator for a thorough and interesting report.

MM7

STRATEGIC PLAN – PURPOSE AND AIMS

The Curator circulated a draft of a strategic forward plan for the museum service which was essential for accreditation and for unity of purpose. The Draft Plan set out the Statement of Purpose and the key aims. The specific objectives and spending plan would be discussed further with the Task Group, the Resource Centre Project Team, the Museum Society and staff.

The Task Group considered the Draft Plan and supported the main elements of this and suggested that a five year rolling programme, subject to annual review, would be the best way forward.

It was also suggested that the tone of the document needed to be more upbeat and needed to celebrate what had already been achieved by the museum service. It was also suggested that the title of the Saffron Walden Museum and Uttlesford Museum Service should be reconsidered at the next meeting of the Task Group.

MM8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Murphy suggested that the possibility of obtaining funding for a writer in residence to record some of the stories about the collections should be investigated. The Curator suggested that this work would tend to be required on an ad-hoc basis and said that the possibility of recording such stories on tape could be investigated. She also suggested that contact could be made with the Essex Archives in connection with the Resource Centre Project.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.