

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT TASK GROUP held at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 7.30pm on 22 AUGUST 2005

Present:- Councillors J I Loughlin and V Pedder (Uttlesford Members);
J Bullen, D Laing, E Planterose and A Watson (Museum Society)

Officers in attendance:- M T Purkiss and C Wingfield

MM9 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Chambers and D J Morson.

MM10 CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor D J Morson, it was agreed that Mr A Watson should Chair the meeting.

MM11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2005 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM12 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute MM3 – Signage

The Curator reported that further meetings had been held with the Saffron Walden Initiative and the Tourist Information Centre and an additional £1,000, from the £6,500 Bridge End Garden savings allocated for Museum Marketing, had been added to the collective pot available for improving signage within the town. Confirmation of the amount which the County Council would contribute was still awaited. In response to a question from Mr Planterose, the Curator said that improved signage at the Church Street entrance would be looked at as a separate issue.

MM13 UPDATE ON MUSEUM RESOURCE CENTRE PROJECT

The Curator reported that the appeal launch on the 2 August had been very successful and she expressed her thanks to the Museum Society, Martin Shaw and the Reporter Group of newspapers for their involvement. She said that following the competition in the Reporter newspaper, the name of Heritage Quest Centre had been chosen for the proposed new Resource Centre.

The Curator also reported that the Resources Committee had now agreed to allocate the Thaxted Road site for the proposed Resource Centre. She said

that a number of donations had been made by members of the Society and other expressions of interest had been made. She added that Martin Shaw was currently working on a glossy brochure for the Resource Centre and the next stage would be to follow up all possible sources of funding.

Mr Watson expressed the thanks of the Task Group to all those who had been involved in the organisation of the appeal launch.

MM14

MUSEUM SERVICE FORWARD PLAN

The Curator reported that following the last meeting the draft strategic Forward Plan had been amended to take account of the comments which had been made. She said that the Forward Plan was essential for accreditation and for unity of purpose. It would be a rolling programme outlining the long term vision for the museum service and would be adjusted each year in the light of financial circumstances and other factors. The Task Group noted the wording of the statement of purpose and key aims and it was explained that the sections on specific objectives and spending plans would be worked on during the coming months.

Mr Watson said the Museum Society Executive Committee had met and had made suggestions on what the Society could achieve. He added that at the last meeting of the Task Group it had been suggested that the name of Saffron Walden Museum/Uttlesford Museum Service should be revisited and he suggested that Members of the Museum Society and District Councillors could be asked to come forward with suggestions. The Curator suggested that letter headings could be amended to read Uttlesford Museum Service incorporating Saffron Walden Museum and Heritage Museum Centre.

The Curator also said a business/financial advisor needed to be appointed urgently to progress aspects of the Forward Plan. Following discussions at the Resource Centre Project Team meeting on 19 August, a general business advisor would be sought to advise on income generation and, if necessary, other advisors specialising in areas such as retail and catering could be brought in later if required. It was agreed that, as the Resource Centre Project Team met on a more regular basis they should be requested to take forward the practical aspects of the Forward Plan. A copy of a discussion document on the Forward Plan is attached to these minutes.

MM15

REPORT OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY

Mr Watson introduced the report of the Museum Society. He said that having regard to the now well established Task Group arrangements between the Council and the Society, the new constitution stated that Uttlesford representatives on the Society's Management Committee should be reduced from three to one Councillor. Mr Laing said that the Charity Commission had appeared to have accepted the new Constitution and were awaiting a copy of the resolution passed at the Society's AGM. He added that an application had been prepared for submission to the Charities Aid Foundation.

MM16

CURATOR'S REPORT

The Task Group considered the Curator's quarterly report for the period from April – June 2005. She said that the Documentation and Exhibitions Officer was current on maternity leave and would soon be moving from the area. Consequently work on the re-display of the ceramics gallery was on hold. She said that visitor figures were slightly down for this quarter because there had been fewer school visits due to the Education Officer's absence.

She added that there had been a very successful programme of summer holiday activities and said that the Mercury Theatre Company would be putting on a presentation of "Three Heads in the Well" in the Castle grounds on 27 August, organised by Leisure Services. BBC Look East had also visited the Museum as part of a feature on Uttlesford in its A-Z series.

She concluded that the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts University of East Anglia were staging a landmark exhibition of Polynesian material from the 18th and 19th century for exhibition at the Sainsbury Centre from March to June 2006 and thereafter at a European venue to be confirmed. They had requested the loan of a number of items and the Task Group supported the loan to the Sainsbury Centre and gave outline permission for the tour to a European venue, subject to confirmation of details.

MM17

MUSEUM MARKETING STRATEGY 2005

The Curator circulated a copy of the draft Marketing Strategy Report which would be submitted to the Community and Leisure Committee on 6 September 2005.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.

MUSEUM BUILDINGS AND CASTLE GROUNDS

Forward Plan and Long-term Developments – Discussion Document for

Saffron Walden Museum Society Executive Sub-Committee 10 August 2005

Background

There have long been ideas and informal discussion about possible future extensions to the Museum, most recently a series of meetings July – September 2003 involving Museum Staff, representatives of the Society and members of the Council, and David Demery, UDC Architect and Property Adviser. These discussions helped to define the purpose and scope of the Resource Centre (now Heritage Quest Centre) project, in relation to future developments at the main Museum site. It is now necessary to draw together and formalise long-term plans for the whole Museum Service in a new Forward Plan, with business planning and costings. This Forward Plan will be needed for:

- Supporting Document for Heritage Quest Centre, for the Council and HLF (and other major funding bodies) – requested by Resources Committee for 17 Nov meeting
- Guidance for Museum Service planning, starting with 2006-07 Annual Service Plan
- Accreditation (government scheme replacing registration), March 2006

It will be the critical plan to shape the Museum's future both immediately and far ahead, and will have wide repercussions for the district

Timescale and Timetable

The Forward Plan may be for a fixed number of years initially, say 2005 – 2010, or may be quantified in terms of short-, medium- and long-term goals, with a notional timeframe. It is recommended that it should take the form of a continuous Rolling Forward Plan which will be reviewed annually no later than August, to fit with the local government planning and budgeting cycle. This will allow it to be updated regularly, and adjusted as inevitable or unforeseen changes in circumstances occur.

The immediate timetable to produce the Forward Plan is now being driven by the Council, HLF and Accreditation requirements and is of increasing urgency. As it has been requested, in draft at least, for Resources Committee, **a draft will need to be prepared by 13 October** for circulation to Community & Leisure Committee first (C&L meets on 25 Oct). If external expert advice is to be sought re. income generation, this is a very short timeframe.

A final document will certainly need to be in place by March 2006 at the latest. For Accreditation purposes and hopefully to support an application to the HLF (depending on progress with fund-raising for the HQ project).

Work so far – Statement of Purpose and Key Aims

Following the format required for Accreditation, Museum staff and MMTG have started work on defining these and a copy is enclosed. The Museum Service's Purpose and Key Aims also support four of the Council's nine Corporate Plan Themes:

- Protecting and Enhancing the character of the district

- Promoting Tourism, Culture and Leisure Opportunities
- Improving Access to Value-for-Money Services
- Supporting Lifelong Learning and Opportunities for Young People

What We Want to Achieve

In a nutshell –

Heritage Quest Centre will

- Provide improved care and access for archaeology, natural sciences and some social history
- Allow collecting to continue where necessary to reflect development of district and communities and make better use of collections
- Increase *Users* - get out to new audiences especially young, families, rural areas

Museum Site Development needs to

Increase *Visitors* and improve quality of visitor facilities and experience

Generate income in support of the Service

Improve use and interpretation of Castle and grounds

Resolve cramped accommodation for researchers, staff and some collections

Priorities for Museum Buildings and Castle Grounds

The removal of some collections to the HQ Centre will allow some re-allocation of space at the Museum and also offer alternative accommodation in the short-term for other collections and Service activities while developments take place at the Museum. In the long-term, the HQ Centre will allow a wider range of functions / activities to be delivered across the Service.

It is envisaged that

- Schools will continue to use the Museum site
- Older students and groups / individuals researching archaeology, most natural sciences and some social history will use the HQ Centre, including evening classes
- Evening talks and special interest visits will use either site, acc. to where relevant collection is based
- Museum site will focus on income-generating activities in support of the Service

Museum and Laboratory / Schoolroom Annex are Grade II Listed Buildings, and the whole site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Saffron Walden Castle) therefore any development will require consent from the Secretary of State and will need to be planned in close co-operation with English Heritage. EH may be able to provide a grant in respect of work on the Castle ruins, which are currently on the 'monuments at risk' register.

Priorities for extending the Museum are:

- New Reception Area and Larger Shop; entrance/reception area for schools may need addressing separately, with space for coats and lunch boxes
- Seating Area, with Drinks machine and water cooler for visitors
- New and more WCs, to accommodate schools as well as visitors and staff

- Multi-purpose Learning and Activities Room for schools, activities, lectures, any groups or hire-out to other organisations and private individuals; with storage for Handling Collections, equipment
- New Kitchenette, adjacent to above (for functions) but accessible to staff as well
- Improvements to accommodation for Staff and Researchers, including better, centralised facility for reference books and documentation, larger work area for preparation of exhibitions, meetings etc
- New Special Exhibitions Gallery, with storage off for display cases, plinths and new Workshop attached

Priorities for Grounds are:

- Area outside new entrance / Learning & Activities Room so that functions can 'spill out' onto paving or grass in fine weather
- Improve Pedestrian access and Car Parking, while preserving overall landscape
- Remove old Workshop, subject to accommodation being replicated in new extension
- Improve maintenance, access and interpretation of Castle, emphasising its importance in the origins and layout of the medieval town, also explore ways of using it as a community facility e.g. simple outdoor arena inside keep for small-scale performances
- Improve grounds as family and visitor picnic area and amenity
- Improve access to Church Street / Common and articulation of whole site with Common