

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00 pm on 30 AUGUST 2007

Present:- Councillors R P Chambers, K Eden and S Schneider (Uttlesford Members) J Bullen, D Laing, E Planterose and R Wallace (Museum Society).

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

MM8 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Councillor Eden be appointed Chairman of the Working Group for the ensuing year.

MM9 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E C Abrahams and D J Morson and from T Turner.

MM10 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2007 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MM11 BUSINESS ARISING

Councillor Chambers apologised that District Councillors had not attended the last meeting due to unforeseen circumstances.

MM12 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE PROJECT

Carolyn Wingfield reported that the lottery application would be signed off by the Resource Centre Task Group on 6 September and would be delivered by hand to the Heritage Lottery Fund on 12 September. The business plan and other supporting documentation were currently being printed.

She said that there had been a dialogue with the Heritage Lottery Fund concerning what could be included within the application and it had now been agreed that the difference in value between the land at Thaxted Road less the value of the Newport Depot accommodation could be included. In effect, this meant that an additional £195,000 could be included as a contribution in kind. In addition, contributions from the work of volunteers could also be included and this amounted to £17,000.

She said that it was a requirement that the bid included a 10% contingency, in addition to a 6% inflation figure for building costs. The total project cost would therefore be £1.7 million which included a 10% contingency figure. The

application to the Heritage Lottery Fund would be in the sum of £977,500 and it was noted that 2/3 of the matched funding was already in place.

Councillor Eden suggested that the three possible outcomes could be refusal of a grant, a negotiated position or approval of the full grant. He added that contingency plans needed to be in place for each of the options and questioned what could be achieved if the application was refused.

Carolyn Wingfield replied that the project would need to be broken down to component parts and an assessment made of what could be achieved to ensure that the Museum maintained its accreditation.

Councillor Chambers said that, whilst he was hopeful of a successful bid, it needed to be borne in mind that the Council was in a difficult financial position and if the application was not successful, it would be difficult for the Council to support the scheme.

Councillor Schneider suggested that an approach should be made to the mayors of town councils in the District requesting that they make the project their mayoral charity for next year. Councillor Eden said that he would also discuss the project with Councillor Anjum to see if other support might be available.

MM13 HERITAGE QUEST TRUST UPDATE

David Laing reported that the Board of Directors had discussed a letter from the Charity Commission which had raised issues concerning the relationship between the Museum Society, the District Council and the Charity and had also referred to the land which was being gifted to the Charity. He said that legal advice was being sought in an attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

MM14 SCHOOL VISITS – BVPI 170c

Richard Auty reported that at the last meeting of the Performance Select Committee, concern had been expressed about falling numbers of school visits to the Museum which was due in part to a number of cancellations and also to the absence of relevant staff.

Carolyn Wingfield explained the issues concerning the absence of the Education Officer and said that the figures for the first quarter were generally unpredictable and it was expected that the full year figure would be in the upper quartile. Councillor Eden added that whilst every effort would be made to increase school numbers, he was comfortable that the Museum would achieve the yearly target and he pointed out that the Museum excelled with its service to school children and a large amount of the work, such as visits by pre-school groups, did not fall within the parameters of the performance indicator.

MM15 **REPORT OF THE SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY**

Richard Wallace reported that the number of adult visitors to the Museum was increasing and there had been a marked increase in the number of attendees at the Society's monthly lecture programme. The next event would be a talk on the history and development of carriage driving on 10 September. He concluded that the Society had decided at its last meeting to supplement the efforts of the main group in helping to raise money towards the project.

MM16 **CURATOR'S REPORT**

Carolyn Wingfield submitted the quarterly report for the period from April to June 2007. The Working Group was particularly pleased to note that visitor figures were up on 2006. Attention was also drawn to the new leaflets which had been published in fulfilment of the Museum's marketing plan.

MM17 **OTHER ISSUES**

Carolyn Wingfield reported that the Education Officer would retire next spring and said that if a replacement was not in post, the Museum could lose at least one term's bookings from school visits. She said that she would be seeking permission to appoint an Education Officer at an early stage so that there was a short handover period to help with the continuation of the service. She would produce a report for a future meeting.

David Laing suggested that at a future stage, it would be useful if a member of the Heritage Quest Trust was invited to attend meetings of the Working Group.

MM18 **NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 13 December at 6.00 pm at the Museum and it was requested that a report on progress with signage be included on the agenda for that meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm.