

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES  
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 6.00 pm on 10 NOVEMBER 2008**

Present:- Councillor K L Eden – Chairman.  
Councillor D J Morson (Uttlesford Member); J Bullen, D Laing, P  
Salvidge and T Watson (Museum Society).

Officers in attendance:- Cathy Roberts (Democratic Services Officer) and  
C Wingfield (Curator).

**MM22 APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E Abrahams. It was noted that the Secretary of the Museum Society, Mrs Hollingworth was not a member of the Working Group but received the minutes and agenda for information.

**MM23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2008 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**MM24 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Group considered the comprehensive Quarterly Report of the Curator which had already been aired at the Community Committee.

**Heritage Quest Centre**

The Curator stated that the situation regarding progress of the Centre was changing daily. It was hoped that an architect would take on the project in February as a replacement for David Demery. The cost would be £25,000 to be met from Lottery contingency funds and a grant of £43,500 from the British and Foreign Schools Society. An application was also currently being considered by the Garfield Weston Foundation for support of up to £90,000.

The Curator understood that the Council had a re-capitalisation issue due to its holdings in Icelandic investments, which might lead to deferral of the scheme for the Centre, even including the very small start needed to save the Planning position from being lost. The Council's funding of £100,000 had to be present at the commencement of the project to validate bids for other funds and there was a danger that all capital projects might be put 'on hold' although this was not yet confirmed.

AGREED that the Chairman seeks an explanation from the Director of Central Services and advises the Group.

**DISPOSAL OF OIL PAINTINGS**

The Working Group received the report of the Curator with an explanation for the recommended courses of action. The Curator stressed that the pictures had been professionally inspected and were considered to have no particular artistic merit, local interest or commercial value. They were in poor condition, would cost a lot to restore and had been photo-recorded for posterity. The best use available for them was for training of conservators.

AGREED that it be recommended that:-

1. The eight paintings are deaccessioned and disposed of.
2. Preference be for disposal by unconditional gift to another museum or gallery, accredited institutions receiving priority, or if unwanted by any museum or gallery, to conservation institutions to assist training of painting and frame conservators.
3. Any paintings which cannot be disposed of by the above means to be destroyed and disposed of, unless a local dealer can be found prepared to take them for a payment to the Acquisition & Display Fund.

**MUSEUM SERVICE FEES AND CHARGES**

The Group received this report in advance of the consideration of information about fees and charges by the Community Committee on 20 November.

The Curator explained that the suggestions regarding entrance fees contained in her report and in the table of charges for the Community Committee were now the subject of changes as advised by the Interim Change Manager and an interim fee change in April 2009 of £1-50 adult / 75p discount (season tickets £5 and £2-50) was now proposed before the rise to £2 in 2010.

The Group felt it was unsatisfactory that the Curator's suggestions had been ignored without consultation but the Chairman commented that this might be a requirement resulting from new policy affecting fees and charges generally.

Group members thought that concurrent entrance fee increases of substantial percentages were likely to be badly received; the 2010 increase would have been able to be supported by the provision of the new Resource Centre. On balance they considered that it would be better to increase the fee to £2 in 2009. The Curator agreed that round figures were best for volunteers to administer; the fees had been stable for many years and hopefully would be so again following this increase.

AGREED

- 1 that the Chairman advises the Chairman of the Community Committee and the Change Manager of the Group's preferred fee change, and speaks to the Director of Central Services about decisions taken without consultation.

- 2 that the Curator's recommendations be in all other respects recommended for adoption by the Community Committee.

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## **INSURANCE OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND REVIEW OF INSURANCE VALUATIONS**

The Group received a briefing note (made available also to the Museum Society and the Uttlesford District Council Strategic Management Board) by the Curator on this subject.

The Curator explained the problem of a large number of out-of-date valuations and the questions arising when objects were considered irreplaceable.

Members commented that rescue archaeology was of value only to the authority, and that it would be important to insure the articles most likely to be stolen.

AGREED that the Curator's recommendations be recommended for adoption by the Community Committee as follows:-

- 1 Museum staff proceed with insurance re-valuations for Ceramics & Glass in 2008-09 and Ethnography in 2009-10 as described in the report, provided that costs remain within estimates and the Museum Society pays for the valuation of the Ceramics & Glass collection only as it has already agreed, as a special case in the current financial circumstances.
- 2 For other collections, staff prepare a report for consideration by the Museum Society and Museum Management Working Group before end of March 2010 on insurance options for other collections, and a programme for updating insurance valuations for each collection. (This will be partly dependent on progress with the Heritage Quest Centre project's collections programme. It is anticipated that the valuation programme will take several years to complete.)

MM28

## **INSURANCE OF MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND REVIEW OF INSURANCE VALUATIONS**

The Group received the report of the Secretary to the Museum Society on Membership changes and the incorporation of the Society as a limited charitable company.

AGREED that the report be noted

The meeting ended at 6.50 pm

