

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 6.00 pm on 10 MARCH 2009**

Present: Councillor K L Eden – Chairman.  
Councillors E C Abrahams, R P Chambers, D J Morson, S V Schneider (Uttlesford Members); P Salvidge and T Watson (Museum Society).

Officers in attendance: Rebecca Procter (Democratic Services Officer) and C Wingfield (Curator).

**M29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from J Bullen and D Laing.

*Councillor Eden declared his interest as a Director of Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited.*

*Councillor Schneider declared her interest as a member of Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited.*

**MM30 PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2008 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**MM31 REPORT OF SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY**

The Working Group considered the report of the Museum Society, which included a recent review of the budget for the Museum for the forthcoming period.

Councillor Eden asked how often the Uttlesford History Fair took place. This event was taking place for the second year, but with a slightly different format. Councillor Eden asked Members their opinion of a recent proposal that Saffron Walden be designated the birthplace of English democracy. All agreed that this suggestion had merit.

**MM32 CURATOR'S REPORT**

*Councillor Chambers arrived at this point, and declared his interest as a Member of Essex County Council and as Chairman of the Essex Police Authority.*

The Group considered the report of the Curator covering the quarter ending December 2008. She commented further as follows:

- Health and safety – following fire check recommendations, modifications to fire doors in the Museum building would start next week.
- Grounds and Castle site – expenditure for the work to the wall had been approved, and work would soon start.

- Collections and research – an Anglo-Saxon sword had been lent to Sutton Hoo.
- Visitor figures – the new Learning Officer was making good progress in marketing education activities.
- There had been only a few private hire events at the Museum, for example for a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. There was not a great demand for this service, due to the cost, as where the entire building was opened, insurance requirements meant two security staff were needed.
- Performance indicators – an additional PI was to be introduced, to show cost per user of the Museum service.

Councillor Chambers referred to the Chinese Circles event mentioned in the report. He suggested the possibility of linking to the Essex Jiangsu festival, which might be an opportunity to benefit from the Community Initiatives Fund. The Curator said the Heritage Quest Centre had received a grant from the Fund as a special case, as usually only community groups could apply. Councillor Chambers offered to pursue a further approach to the Community Initiatives Fund, as the project was a community endeavour, and the Museum had run events which had tied in with the Chinese festival.

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## **HERITAGE QUEST UPDATE**

### **Construction**

The Curator gave a verbal update. She said matters were moving on at a frenetic pace, but that she was pleased with the progress made by the architects, Cowper Griffith. Due to the appointment of new architects, it was necessary to re-work the costings and specifications which had originally been prepared by David Demery. This report had now been prepared by the quantity surveyor. Consultants' advice would be sought on the most cost effective materials to be used. A priority was energy supply, and Jake Roos, the Council's Energy Efficiency Surveyor, had applied for 50% funding from the Low Carbon Building Programme for a ground source heat pump. A meeting with the architects and quantity surveyor was to take place on 30 March, to set the revised construction budget and start the tendering process.

### **Access**

A more immediate issue was access. The required notice had been served on Granite UK and its subcontractors, in accordance with the s.106 agreement, under which they were to have provided an access and haulage route. Unfortunately, due to the recession, Granite had now put on hold all development. Essex County Council had been very helpful in trying to find a solution to site access. However, it would be necessary to agree only temporary access for the foreseeable future until such time as a proper road could be built.

### **Funding**

Another immediate priority was funding. On the positive side, the Round Table had generously donated £2K. However, there was a need to consider further the approach to be pursued with two other donors. One of these,

Ridgeons, would be discussed with Tony Watson outside this meeting. The other donor, BAA, had already pledged £32K but payment had not yet been made, despite several requests. Legal advice had been taken. BAA might find it more attractive to make the payment in favour of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd, as a charity. Councillor Chambers offered to take this matter up with Stuart Wingate of BAA.

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## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Heritage Quest Centre Official Opening**

Correspondence had been entered into with Lord Petre regarding inviting a member of the Royal Family to open the Heritage Quest Centre. The Group took the view that a prominent member of the Royal Family, ideally Prince Charles himself, would be an appropriate person to open such an innovative building. The official opening should take place at least a couple of months after the Centre had been completed.

### **Heritage Quest Centre Working Team**

The Curator suggested that a team of four people be selected from within the Group to be available for attending meetings on short notice, in order to assist in taking operational decisions. The following agreed to be available for this purpose: Councillors Eden and Schneider, Tony Watson and Paul Salvidge.

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## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be Tuesday 16 June at 6 pm in the Council Offices.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm.