

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 6.00 pm on 16 JUNE 2009

Present: Councillors R H Chamberlain and S V Schneider (Uttlesford Members), J Bullen, D Laing, P Salvidge and T Watson (Museum Society).

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

MM1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED that Councillor S V Schneider be elected Chairman of the Working Group for the meeting.

MM2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eden and Morson.

Councillor Schneider declared her interest as a member of Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited and welcomed Councillor Chamberlain, the Chairman of the Community and Housing Committee, to his first meeting of the Museum Management Working Group .

MM3 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2009 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. It was agreed that the words “(minutes only)” should appear on the agenda in future after the name of the Museum Secretary.

MM4 REPORT OF SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY

The Working Group considered the report of the Museum Society.

Councillor Schneider informed the meeting that Councillor Chamberlain would be attending the AGM on behalf of the President of the Museum Society.

MM5 CURATOR’S REPORT

The Group considered the report of the Curator covering the quarter ending March 2009. She commented further as follows:

- **Staff** – A son had been born to the Documentation and Exhibitions Officer and her family. The Working Group asked that their congratulations be conveyed to her.

- **Buildings and site** – a high volume of work and inspections had been carried out in March in addition to work in compliance with Fire Regulations.
- Another minor flood had occurred at the Newport Store in February but significant damage to collections had been averted.
- **Grounds and Castle site** – In answer to a question the Curator explained who used the Museum car park and on what terms, and the commitment the Museum had to provide parking for Museum users and generally to retain flexibility.
- She described an initiative for conserving the Castle ruins which was being explored with Barbara Bosworth and English Heritage.
- **Collections care and conservation** – The Curator gave a detailed account of the work in cataloguing ethnography collections which the Museum had been able to carry out as a result of the input of Museum Society funding, and volunteers' work on maps and archives.
- **Displays and Visitor Services** – The Curator reminded the meeting that the drop in visitor figures for the first quarter of 2009 had been predicted as an effect to be expected from the need for the new Learning Officer to re-build school visits, and that shop income levels were directly related. It was now however noticeable that the figures were rising healthily whereas in some other museums the recession was causing dwindling figures for school visits.
- **Local Performance Indicators** – The Curator explained that income/visitor indicators had been skewed in the year 2008/09 by the fact that neither the Easter of 2008 nor that of 2009 fell within the financial year 2008/09.

In answer to a question from Councillor Chamberlain the Curator explained the process which took place to plan, fund and organise the programme of temporary exhibitions.

The Chairman thanked the Curator for her full and excellent report.

MM6 HERITAGE QUEST UPDATE

The Curator gave a verbal update on staff recruitment , cost planning with a view to preparation of tender documents and the results of carrying out soil tests in appropriate parts of the site. She added that the architects would be attending the meeting of the Museum Resource Centre Project Team being held in the next week on Thursday 25 June.

The Chairman thanked the Curator for her report.

MM7

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be Wednesday 9 September at 6 pm in the Museum, Saffron Walden.

The meeting ended at 6:55 pm.