

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at the SCHOOL ROOM, SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 2pm on 6 JULY 2011**

Present: Councillor Rolfe – Chairman  
Councillor D Morson (Uttlesford Member).

J Bullen, P Salvidge and A Watson (Museum Society Limited).

Officers  
in attendance: R Auty (Divisional Head: Performance and Communications), R Procter (Democratic Services Officer), A Webb (Director of Corporate Services) and C Wingfield (Curator).

**MM1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was agreed that Councillor Eden should be Chairman of the Museum Management Working Group, and that in his absence today that Councillor Rolfe should be Chairman for the meeting.

At the request of Tony Watson it was noted that the meetings of the Group were not open to the public, and that the agenda papers should reflect this. Minutes would be published once approved by the group.

**MM2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Chambers and K Eden, and from D Laing.

**MM3 PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2010 were amended to show that Councillor Morson had been present at the meeting. Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes were received and confirmed as a correct record.

**MM4 HERITAGE QUEST CENTRE**

The Director of Corporate Services took Members through the report on the Heritage Quest Centre ('HQC'). The report gave an update on the current position and made recommendations for the future.

The report set out significant issues which had arisen, such as the fact that the identified land had become landlocked due to the failure of the landowner to sell the land for approved development; and that the land was 2 metres below the required level and would have to be raised before the project could commence. A further issue was the state of

the national economy and reducing budgets because of cuts in Government grants. There were implications for the project's budget and consequently the recommendations were to halt the current project to build the HQC; to investigate an option for storage at the Council's depot in Newport; and to submit a new bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund ('HLF') aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Museum.

Tony Watson said much informal discussion had taken place between officers, the Museum Society Limited and Councillor Rolfe, as the Council's executive member for communities and partnerships, and it was accepted that extra storage was essential.

Councillor Morson asked whether if the project had gone ahead in 2008 the same issues of the site being 'landlocked' would have been encountered. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed this would have been case, due to requirements under a section 106 agreement with the County that the former civic amenity site should be closed off.

Members considered the changed circumstances which necessitated re-considering the viability of the HQC project, and discussed the future sustainability of the Museum. Members noted the suggestion of the Heritage Lottery Fund case officer that a new bid be considered, to develop the existing Museum in such as way as to increase income for way of, for example a 'coffee shop' and lecture rooms.

It was noted that in order to submit a new bid the Council and Museum Society would need to first notify the HLF of the cessation of the HQC project.

In reply to a question from Councillor Morson, the Curator gave a summary of the impact of this course of action on the grants which had been obtained. She said it would be possible to reapply for some of the large grants, for example the three landfill tax grants. There were local donations which she hoped could be retained providing the donors agreed for the money to be used for the revised project.

The Director of Corporate Services said there were many of the same elements in the proposed new bid, such as outreach and public access, which were key to funding.

It was noted that Museum Society directors would send members of the Society a report. A press release would be issued once members had had an opportunity to consider the content of the report.

Regarding the location of a storage facility, the Director of Corporate Services explained that certain sites had initially been considered, including a site at Thaxted Road, but that it would be more cost-effective to use Council owned land. He referred members to plans

showing the possible modification of part of the Council's depot at Newport as a storage building. The area was in a flood plain, but modifications could include measures to protect the building from flooding by dissipation of water underneath the building. Planning permission would be necessary. Funding would come from non-HLF funds already available for the HQC project, totalling about £120,000. The Museum Society would meet the rest of the costs of the building, subject to issues being resolved around ownership to maximise charitable relief.

The group discussed various aspects of the storage project, including the retention of the building by the Council in the long-term, the need for joint access; and future costs. Members also discussed the size and layout of the building; and the costs of transferring items. The Curator suggested that in addition to the hiring of a removal firm, it might be possible to utilise the help of Carver Barracks and the Young Farmers, to keep costs down.

Members then considered the recommendation that a new bid for Phase 2 be put forward in relation to developing the long-term sustainability of the Museum through various alterations. It was noted that the HLF case officer was very supportive of this option; that any new development would only be towards the east of the existing building, and that there would be greater options for outreach work which was a significant factor in the bid. Once the Museum Society and Cabinet had approved the proposals a new bid could be submitted.

Questions relating to planning permission were discussed briefly, and it was noted that English Heritage had carried out a site visit to consider the possible development on the east side of the Museum.

The Chairman noted that preliminary work would continue

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet of Uttlesford District Council that

- 1 notice is given to the Heritage Lottery Fund that the Council and Museum Society no longer wish to proceed with the Heritage Quest Centre project; and
- 2 further investigation of the option for additional storage at Newport Depot is undertaken and reported back to a future meeting of this group; and
- 3 work starts on submitting a new bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund aimed at ensuring the long term sustainability of the Museum.

MM5

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was agreed that a small group of Museum Society directors, Uttlesford members and officers should take the project forward, comprising: Paul Salvidge and Tony Watson; Councillors Morson, Rolfe and Eden; and Richard Auty, Adrian Webb and Carolyn Wingfield.

The Curator said the Museum had been offered a red telephone box by Saffron Walden Town Council. It was agreed to accept the offer and to store the telephone box at Newport depot.

MM6      **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This would be arranged following the determination of the recommendations above by Cabinet and the Museum Society.

The meeting ended at 3.15pm.