

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at the SCHOOL ROOM, SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 6pm on 8 MAY 2013

Present: Councillor K Eden – Chairman
Councillors R Chambers, D Morson and H Rolfe (Uttlesford Members)
P Salvidge and A Watson (Museum Society Limited).

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services),
R Dobson (Democratic Services Officer), A Webb (Director of Corporate Services) and C Wingfield (Curator).

MM37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Laing and Richard Priestley.

MM38 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2013 were received and confirmed as a correct record.

MM39 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute MM36 – Insurance

The Director of Corporate Services said a teleconference call had been arranged to take place on 9 May, and that the tender for the new insurance contract should be issued in June.

MM40 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

The Curator presented the report for Quarter 4 from January to March 2013. She highlighted certain points: the Museum would be lending a painting to Colchester for an exhibition on Bawden in Essex; visitor figures for the quarter had exceeded those for the same period, despite the impact of bad weather in January, and the figures for the entire year were on course to match those for 2011/12, partly due to the boost from the Sparks Will Fly event. Shop takings were up a little, but donations were down slightly. The promotion of the Museum through social media seemed to be drawing in more visitors from a wider area. Grants had been received totalling £12,250 for the two years 2012/13 and 2013/14. However, this level of grant funding was exceptional for one quarter and was unfortunately not likely to be replicated.

MM41

MUSEUM SOCIETY REPORT

Tony Watson presented the report of the Museum Society. The Museum Society Board had agreed to support the construction of the new store with £350,000 although further discussions were needed as the costs would exceed this amount. The structure of the committees appointed by the Board had been changed, replacing the Management Committee with two committees, one for Administration and the other for Museum Support. These new arrangements were already working very well. A new officer, Douglas Kent had been appointed to assist with the redevelopment of the Museum buildings, bringing to the project his expertise as a surveyor with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The farm carts which had for a long time been the subject of attempts to find a new location from the owner's property in Hempstead would now be stored in a barn in Ashdon for which the Board had taken a six month licence.

Tony Watson asked the Group to consider giving the Museum Society free access to the museum in recognition of their voluntary work. The current position was that the Society refunded the Council each year the cost of the season tickets each Society member received.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that in view of the instruction from Members that officers must bring the Museum's budget down, the loss of this income of £650 would need to be recovered elsewhere.

Councillor Chambers said he would look at the situation with officers.

AGREED officers to consider with the Portfolio Holder for Finance the possibility of enabling the Museum Society to be granted free access to the Museum by removing the need to refund season ticket costs.

MM42

STORE UPDATE

The Director of Corporate Services gave an update on provision of a store for the Museum's collections. Much work had been done, initially via a framework agreement with a company which was involved in some of the Council's house-building. Unfortunately the projected costs given by this company were well in excess of the available budget. Therefore the decision was made to proceed to full tender. Early indications suggested that the tender price would be much nearer the available budget. The Council's former surveyor, Martin Stocks, had been employed to assist with the project. It was hoped that the tender could be issued as soon as possible and that the store could be built by the end of December. There was unfortunately no money for mobile racking, but an approach could perhaps be made for Lottery funding.

Members discussed the potential cost of racking and agreed that it would be an option to apply to the "Our Heritage" lottery scheme. Members felt it would be helpful to have the involvement of a designer for the racking at

an early stage. The possibility of raising funds for the racking locally from private donors was discussed.

The Curator said next year the Museum would hold an exhibition to be called "Secrets from the Store" which would explain what the Museum was doing, and would be an opportunity to get people involved with financial help or volunteering.

The Chairman asked about the timetable for the store to be built. The Director of Corporate Services said it was the aim to have the contract awarded by late summer.

MM43

FORWARD PLAN

The Curator presented the Museum Service Forward Plan for the period 2013-18, which was one of the key documents required for accreditation. The document, which had been circulated at the last meeting for comment, had been amended in the section on "Objectives". The Curator suggested the Forward Plan should be reviewed annually in November so as to coincide with budget preparation. It was part of the accreditation requirement that the Forward Plan be regularly reviewed.

The Group considered the Risk Assessment accompanying the Forward Plan. It was agreed that the Risk Assessment should be brought to meetings regularly, and that it would be produced in a format to show both impact and likelihood scores, to correspond with the corporate format of the Council.

Councillor Rolfe said there were some uncertainties on costs regarding the move of items to the new storage facility. It would be good to have an income assessment for the next few years, and a calculation of the impact of the reducing grant from Uttlesford.

The Director of Corporate Services said he would give a brief overview of the financial position under any other business.

AGREED to recommend that Cabinet approve the Museum Service Forward Plan 2013-18 (subject to the amendment of the risk assessment to the format used by the Council to show scores for impact and likelihood of risks).

Members congratulated the Curator for her excellent work on this report.

The Curator said thanks were also due to Richard Priestley.

MM44

COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Curator presented a document required under the accreditation process, for a Collections Development Policy, formerly the Acquisition and Disposal Policy. She drew Members' attention to the section on

disposal which included the possibility of the sale of items. She said the Museum Society would be re-configuring the acquisitions and display funds so that these funds met accreditation standards. Those funds would then be ring-fenced which would leave other funds available for more significant projects.

Members discussed the potential impact of the changes to the policy. The Curator said there would be no radical changes but the new policy would permit a general re-focusing. For example, duplicate items would be weeded out from the collection, which dated back 180 years. The Museum was already selective and tried not to accept items indiscriminately. Archaeological finds were largely dictated by the planning process and statistical analysis required a certain quantity of finds to be retained although sampling could be employed with large quantities of some finds to reduce the volume.

AGREED to recommend that Cabinet approve the Collections Development Policy.

MM45 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 14 August at 6pm.

MM46 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(i) TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group considered updated terms of reference, the last revision having been carried out on 18 November 2009. Minor amendments to the draft were suggested in order to reflect more accurately the bodies involved as shown in italics below:

- 4 (iii) Discuss matters and make recommendations to the Council and the Society on matters relating to the management of the Museum Service where a decision needs to be taken or an action needs to be ratified by the Council *and/or* the Society including the purchase or disposal of objects and the loan of objects to other museums
- 4(v) Appoint from the *Group* the Council's representative to attend at and report on any relevant meetings of other organisations as determined by the Group
- i. 4(viii) Where appropriate make recommendations to the *Society and/or the Council* concerning alterations to the interior or exterior of the Museum building major projects capital developments and any other significant proposals affecting the Museum

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet to adopt the amended terms of reference for the Museum Management Working Group.

(ii) BUDGET FORECAST

The Director of Corporate Services said the budget for the year 2014/15 would need to reduce from the current figure down to £160,000 as specified by the Council. Officers had carried out detailed work already into ways in which the budget could be reduced to this extent, and were meeting with an estate agent during the next week in order to market for sale or rent the Curator's House, and for commercial rent the School Room. These measures alone would not resolve the shortfall, and further options were being explored.

The Group acknowledged the challenge ahead.

(iii) LENDING TO COUNCIL OFFICES

Councillor Rolfe suggested lending pictures from the Museum's collection to the Council Offices, or the Town Council or Library in order to promote the Museum.

AGREED to explore the possibilities for lending items to local bodies for promotion purposes.

The meeting ended at 7pm.