

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at the SCHOOL ROOM, SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 6pm on 27 NOVEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor D Morson – Vice Chairman in the Chair
Councillors R Chambers and H Rolfe (Uttlesford Members)
P Salvage and A Watson (Museum Society Limited).

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services),
P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), A Webb (Director of Corporate Services), N Wittman (ICT and Corporate Support Team Manager) and C Wingfield (Curator).

MM10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Eden (Uttlesford) and D Laing (Museum Society).

MM11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2013 were received and signed as a correct record.

MM12 MATTERS ARISING

(i) Minute MM7 – Museum Access Policy

The Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the Cabinet had approved the Museum Access Policy.

MM13 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

The Curator presented her report for July to September 2013 and highlighted the points noted below.

Staffing – The redundancy of the Conservation Officer would take effect in January 2014 and this post would then be deleted. The post of Collections Officer (Human History) had been advertised. A number of assistants had now been employed on casual contracts.

Buildings and Site – The building contractor had now commenced work in the Museum. Weather proofing work was underway to deal with dampness. She was expecting to vacate the Curator's house in Castle Street by the end of January

Collections and Research – The horse-drawn vehicles in temporary accommodation at Whitensmere Farm had been cleaned and must be removed from the existing barn when the agreement expired in March. Various options were explained for the storage of these vehicles. The

options included a possible loan or transfer arrangement with a willing museum or, as a last resort, outright disposal.

Members asked a number of questions about whether it would be possible to retain these historic vehicles or to ensure they were placed on exhibition somewhere locally, possibly within the Castle grounds as previously discussed. The Curator agreed to explore all possible options and would then report the outcome.

The Curator said that Newport Grammar School had taken part in the dig on the Common and this had given pupils at the school the opportunity to undertake project work.

MM14 MUSEUM SOCIETY REPORT

Tony Watson reported that work was proceeding on the preparation of a revised lease for the Curator's House and there would be an updated management agreement.

MM15 STORE UPDATE

The ICT and Corporate Support Team Manager gave an update on the provision of the store for the Museum's collections. The contract had been awarded in November on the basis of the tenders received. Work on the store would start on 6 January and be completed by 30 June 2014.

She explained the detailed checking procedures followed by officers in discussing the scheduled work with the contractor which had resulted in some significant savings in cost. It was clarified that racking was not included in the work to be completed as part of the contract but that lottery funding would be sought for the provision of suitable racking for the storage of items within the collection.

The Curator explained the process for the submission of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This would be for a sum in the region of £100k. She had been advised to apply for funding in April rather than at the end of the current lottery funding period. Some match funding would probably be required as part of the application.

There was a deadline to vacate the store at Newport to coincide with the facility at Shire Hill.

Councillor Rolfe asked whether racking had been included in the original budget. The Director of Corporate Services said that racking had been removed from the specification as well as a number of other items and this had resulted in cost reductions of £175k. He said that he would provide a breakdown of the relevant contract sums for the benefit of members and Museum Society representatives.

MM16 **MUSEUM AND CASTLE UPDATE**

The Director of Corporate Services updated the working group with information about work on the Castle which was being led by Andrew Taylor. A meeting on the whole site had taken place earlier in the week and clarification was being sought from the HLF as to whether they would require a single bid.

It was hoped that bids could be submitted in either two or three phases. If so, the first bid was expected to be ready for submission by the summer. He explained how the HLF's likely preference for a single bid could be met in more than one phase.

Councillor Rolfe asked whether the display of the horse-drawn vehicles could be accommodated within the remodelled site.

In summary, the Assistant Director Corporate Services said that he would confirm by email the outcome of the meeting with representatives of the HLF.

MM17 **CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR THE MUSEUM**

The Curator explained the changes needed to the Museum service to take account of current levels of staffing. It was proposed to suspend some services temporarily during January and February.

Once the Conservation Officer post became vacant in early January, due to a combination of staff leave and time taken to recruit to the Collections Officer post, the service would temporarily be reduced to one full time officer and the security officer post only. There would accordingly be no resource available to deal with a number of aspects of the service. As a result, there would be a temporary suspension of work in connection with research enquiries and new collections. In addition there were no school visits scheduled in January.

Members noted this information.

MM18 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 26 February 2014 at 6pm. Working Group members expressed a wish to meet together at some suitable point to view the changes taking place on the Museum and Castle site and this would be arranged as appropriate.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm.