

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at MUSEUM STORE  
SHIREHILL SAFFRON WALDEN at 6pm on 22 JULY 2015**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)  
Councillors B Light and L Wells (Uttlesford Members)  
Mr R Priestley, P Salvidge and A Watson (Society Members).

Officers in attendance: A Rees (Democratic and Electoral Services  
Officer), A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)  
and C Wingfield (Curator).

**MM1 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Chambers was nominated and duly elected as Chairman.

**MM2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sell, Mr D Laing and R  
Auty.

**MM3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**MM4 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr Watson outlined the Museum Society's role and relationship with both the  
Museum and the Council. He explained the purpose of the Society was to help  
provide funding for staff, collections and additional facilities, whilst the Council  
was responsible for the day to day running of the Museum. The Working Group  
provided a legal link between the Council and the Society. He then gave a  
summary of his report

Members discussed the progress which had been made on moving collections  
to the store in Shirehill. The Society had set up a Committee which would look  
to establish a framework for re-development of the Museum. Funding for any  
redevelopment would be funded through a mixture of Society and Heritage  
Lottery funding.

In response to a question by Councillor Chambers, the Curator said artefacts in  
the store were used at the Museum during temporary exhibitions. Additionally  
when more space on the ground floor of the Museum became available, a  
greater number of items would be placed on display. The Curator said most of  
the artefacts would be moved to the new store by volunteers, but there were  
some items it was necessary to employ specialists to move.

Members were informed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services that over the past five years the Museum's budget had been reduced by £100,000. This had resulted in the loss of some staff and the decision to close the Museum on Mondays.

MM5

## **QUARTERLY REPORT APRIL – JUNE 2015**

The Curator explained the purpose of the Quarterly Report and presented the latest report to the Working Group. Almost all the racking at the new store had now been installed, with the packing and sorting of collections also nearly finished. Hayley Wilson's contract as a casual Admin Assistant had been extended until 30 September. This had been invaluable as it had allowed the Museum to fulfil its security needs. Using the Lottery method, it had been calculated the total value of volunteer contributions was £40,000.

The Curator said the Museum's security system had recently been tested. There had been a false alarm at the store in Newport and as a result the Police had said they would no longer automatically attend until the system was upgraded. As the store was to be evacuated shortly, the current system was to be maintained. Two staff would still attend call-outs and call the Police if necessary.

The new acquisitions and disposals throughout the previous quarter were outlined. The Curator explained that collections and research enquiries, and identification services had been temporarily suspended so staff could prioritise packing and moving collections to the new store.

The Curator said there had been a significant rise in visitor numbers compared with the same quarter in the previous year. This was attributable to the large number of outside events at the Museum. Ticket sales were lower however, as many people who had attended events on the Museum's grounds had not entered the Museum itself. Sales from the shop were also lower as many schools no longer allowed children to purchase items from the shop.

In response to questions by Councillor Light, the Curator said the Museum had put the donations box in a more prominent position to encourage more donations. The Museum had experimented with offering free entry, but the increase in donations was not sufficient to cover the loss of admission revenue. Any donations received went to the Council, which meant it would be difficult to specifically ask for donations. It would have to be agreed that donations went to the Society, who would then have to underwrite the loss in donations revenue. Mr Watson said he would have to check the Society's constitution to see whether this was allowed.

Councillor Chambers noted that more donations tended to be received when a specific goal was given for the donations. Members agreed having specific donation goals would be of benefit.

Discussions moved onto the Museum's admission fee. It was agreed that the fee was currently of nominal value and any slight increase would still result in a

nominal admission fee. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services said a review of fees and charges was taking place in November. It was agreed that the Curator would look at the admission fees charged by other museums around the county and report back to the next meeting of the Working Group.

The Curator said the number of visitors to the new website was much greater than to the old one, although some of the additional interest was due to the number of events the Museum had held in the last few months.

The Report provided a breakdown of talks and school events which the Museum had held during the previous quarter. May often proved to be a busy month for the Museum, which had also benefitted from a number of on-site events such as the Fete de la Musique. Staff had attended a number of outreach programmes at external events.

In response to Councillor Light, The Curator explained that the Museum sent leaflets to as many households as was practicable and attempted to utilise the internet in order to maximise interest. The Museum's advertising budget was £1,800 and extensive advertising was not possible due to the limited budget.

#### **MM6 MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS 2015**

The Curator said the Code of Ethics applied to staff, volunteers and Society Members and was due to be revised at the Society's AGM in November. The Code would be discussed at a future meeting of the Working Group.

#### **MM7 ACCREDITATION SCHEME**

The Curator provided an overview of the accreditation process. The Museum had been fully accredited by the Arts Council in February. Accreditation was a show of confidence in the Museum and its Forward Plan. It also put the Museum in a stronger position to apply for grants and Lottery funding. The Arts Council gave two areas for improvement. The first of these was to improve the store where artefacts were kept when not on display. The new store at Shirehill had already been completed and the racking installed so this was being addressed.

The second area of improvement was related to documentation for collections. Currently the record of items was kept in paper, but the possibility of using a computer database was being explored. There was limited capacity to achieve this transition in house, so funding would be needed. Although the Arts Council did not consider an electronic database to be essential, but given the large number of items stored by the Museum electronic records would be desirable.

#### **MM8 FORWARD PLAN 2013**

The Curator presented an overview of the Museum's Forward Plan. It was hoped the Plan would be re-examined every November although this had not been possible last year due work surrounding moving to the Shirehill Store.

The Plan was split into two phases; Phase 1 aimed to improve storage both off-site and at the Museum; the main aim of Phase 2 was to improve facilities at the Museum itself.

The Curator informed Members that a geo-physical survey of the grounds surrounding the Castle had been completed free of charge, but a more detailed survey and analysis was required which would cost £6,000. Most of the land surrounding the Museum was owned by the Council and not the Society and this meant the Society could not provide the funding. The Curator said the Museum had applied for funding through the Essex Heritage Trust, but had been unsuccessful in the current round of allocations. The Museum would apply again when funding next became available. Once funding had been secured, the possibility of holding a community excavation under professional supervision would be explored.

MM9

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members discussed a proposal by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to remove a set of double yellow lines on the road opposite the entrance to the Museum and replace them with additional parking spaces.

Mr Watson said the Fire Service had asked for the lines to be installed to prevent vehicles from parking opposite the entrance and preventing emergency vehicles from entering the Museum's grounds in the event of a fire.

Following NEPP's proposal, the Fire Service has been consulted and had said there would not be any issue with trucks accessing the Museum unless aerial ladders were needed in order to combat a fire.

Members discussed access to the Museum. It was noted that although the width of the gate entrance had increased due to recent works and smaller trucks would be able to access the Museum, given the size of the Museum there would be a need for aerial ladders in the event of a fire.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services said it would be difficult to successfully object as the Fire Service had not raised any objections to the proposal and they were the organisation who initially requested that double yellow lines were installed. He suggested raising any issues with Councillor Susan Barker, who was the Chairman of NEPP.

MM10

#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed the next meeting would be held on 30 September.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.