

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at SHIREHILL STORE  
SAFFRON WALDEN at 6pm on 27 JANUARY 2016**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)  
Councillors G Sell and L Wells (Uttlesford Members)  
Mr R Priestley, Mr P Walker and Mr A Watson (Society Members).

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), A Rees (Democratic and Electoral Services) and C Wingfield (Curator).

**MM18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B Light and A Webb (Director of Finance and Corporate Services).

**MM19 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 30 SEPTEMBER 2016**

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

**MM20 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The report was taken as read. Mr Watson said the Society had recently purchased a Viking ring, with grant aid from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund as well as the Headley Trust, which had been found in Thaxted. There were plans to put pictures of recently acquired artefacts on the Council's and the Society's websites.

**MM21 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORTS**

The Curator presented her reports and began by outlining the visitor figures for the previous two quarters, which were below target for October through to December. Gemma Tully, who was the Visitor and Learning Services Officer, had left in October. This had meant the Museum had not been able to encourage as many schools to visit as before.

User figures had continued to be well above the target. This was largely due to the new website. There was growing anecdotal evidence that people were visiting the Museum after using the website.

The Curator said the Museum had also received a number of grants over the past two quarters. These included a £5,000 grant from the Essex Heritage Trust which would fund a geo-physical analysis of the castle site. This would analyse the data produced by the radar survey. A mitigation strategy would then be produced which would provide the foundation for future works on the site.

The Museum had also received a £2,000 grant from the Essex County Council Arts Development Fund which would be used for both Ashdon's and Hadstock's commemoration of the Battle of Assandun.

The Curator explained that there had been no specific issues with any of the buildings. Work would soon be taking place in the Ceramics Gallery and professional movers would be required to take down two of the paintings. Finally, the Curator thanked all the volunteers for their contribution over the last two quarters.

In response to a question by Mr Watson, the Curator said the exact number of visitors in respect of the collections display could not be known, although any increase would be picked up in the visitor figures.

Members discussed the Queen's upcoming 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and the possibility of the Museum commemorating the occasion. It was agreed that the Assistant Director Corporate Services and the Curator would discuss what would be achievable given the current constraints on staff and infrastructure at the Museum. The Curator informed Members that the Museum did have a sample of the Queen's coronation dress, which could be incorporated into the Object of the Month display.

In response to a question by Councillor Chambers, the Curator said that the hedge which surrounded the castle was being cut down. It was presumed that the Planning Department's programme of conservation work was now nearing the stage where the monument could be more open to the public, once work to consolidate the walls of the keep had been completed.

MM22

## **SHIREHILL STORE MOVE – VERBAL REPORT**

The Curator provided an update on the moving of artefacts to the Shirehill Store. She explained that around three quarters of the collections had now been moved and anything which could be moved from the store in Newport had been. It was expected that the remaining items would be moved out by the end of the financial year.

The evacuation of collections from the Museum had begun. The School Room was the currently the primary concern and its evacuation had been brought forward as a result. There were some large items which would require professional movers. Everything was expected to be moved by the end of May. However, this meant that the Ceramics Gallery redecoration could no longer proceed as the small storeroom earmarked to take the Ceramics exhibits now had to be used to take the education & handling collections and equipment from the Schoolroom.

The Curator said there had already been a number of enquiries from groups interested in visiting the Store. Visits would be held off until the move had been completed, apart from one workshop for the Wendens Ambo Society which had a project timetable to meet. The move was a long term project and would lead

to a number of groups visiting the store to look at artefacts as part of their research.

In response to a question by Councillor Sell, the Curator said that some items were logged on a computer, whilst others still had card logs. Every item would have to have its location record changed to reflect that it had been moved to Shirehill. She added that the transition to a fully computer based system would be picked up as part of the accreditation process.

Members moved onto discussions about the letting potential of the School Room and the reasons why the house on Castle Street was sold rather than let.

Members then considered arrangements for the formal opening of the Shirehill Store. It was agreed that holding the formal opening on 11 April was preferred, with guided tours of the Store being offered throughout the day, and a further day of tours on 18 April. It was agreed that the opening would provide an opportunity to formally thank the volunteers for their hard work.

The Curator noted that the Store would not allow for large tours. Members considered the possibility of offering time slots to ensure that tour groups were manageable sizes. Officers and councillors would be invited to attend early evening sessions.

The Curator said IT installation was due shortly. The intruder alarm system was going to be upgraded to a police response system by the end of February. Lastly, the heating system in the Store was not proving powerful enough to adequately heat the whole store. Solutions to this issue were being looked at.

MM23

## **INSURANCE VALUATIONS OF DOCUMENTATION – VERBAL REPORT**

The Curator said that the Museum had received a £5,000 grant from the Museum Collections Valuation Trust to run an insurance valuation programme. Due to the need to complete the School Room evacuation, it was necessary to postpone the insurance valuation programme until Easter. The company who would carry out the valuations had been contacted and had said that they preferred the later commencement date.

The Store move was part of the Museum's forward plan (Stage I) and the move now needed to be followed by an intensive programme of work on the collections and documentation on the computer database. This would require a medium sized Heritage Lottery Fund grant and the application for the grant would need to include reference to use of and access to the collections if it was to be successful.

Stage II of the forward plan involved extending and redisplaying the Museum and included creation of a new area which would be available for private hire. Mr Watson said it was hoped that a building for hire would be built which was separate from the Museum. The Curator explained that currently, when the Museum was let out for an event two staff members had to be present for

security reasons. Security would not be as significant of a concern with a room which could be sealed off at the end of the building with a separate entrance.

Mr Watson said the Society had been working the Assistant Director Corporate Services and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to help realise the forward plan. The Assistant Director Corporate Services explained that

Councillor Chambers thanked the Curator, the Museum's staff, the Society, volunteers and officers for their work officers and Society representatives were working together to move to a position where Society funding could be used to support individual projects in the museum, rather than support general revenue costs.

**MM24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Curator said that a heritage exhibition was being held in Langley. The Museum had provided information and a photograph of the Langley parish hearse, now in the Shirehill store.

**MM25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 13 April 2016 at 6pm in the Shirehill Store.

The meeting ended at 7pm.