

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at SHIREHILL STORE
SAFFRON WALDEN at 6pm on 20 JULY 2016**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)
Councillor B Light (Uttlesford District Council)
Mr A Watson (Museum Society Limited)

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

MM1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sell and Wells, Mr Priestley, Mr Salvidge and Mr Walker.

MM2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2016

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

MM3 MUSEUM SOCIETY REPORT

The report was taken as read. Mr Watson added that Magna Carta exhibition had recently opened and the Private View had been well attended.

The report was noted.

MM4 QUARTERLY REPORT APRIL – JUNE

The Curator presented her report and highlighted the main points which were not going to be covered later in the meeting. Wendy-Jo Atter had been appointed as the new Admin Officer at the Museum.

Desk cover at the Museum had been thin. She was looking to attract more volunteers and would be including an article in the Society newsletter to help address this.

Officers had been looking at revisions to the fire evacuation procedures in place at the Museum. The Assistant Director Corporate Services explained that they had met with the fire service earlier in the day and the issues were of low risk. They were mainly surrounding the evacuation of wheelchair users on the first floor. This followed a fire risk assessment carried out by the Emergency Planning and Fire Safety Officer.

Mr Watson asked the Curator what percentage of the Museum's visitors were wheelchair users. In response the Curator said that she estimated the number was roughly one in a hundred, but the number could go up or down sporadically

as the Museum could have group visits from people with special needs. The Museum was looking at ways to monitor the number of disabled visitors and may look to upgrade its evacuation equipment.

The Curator then informed members that a relief carving of Roman gladiator had been loaned to the Grosvenor Museum in Chester. They would be making a digital facsimile of the carving. The Museum had helped with a number of research projects.

The Object of the Month project had continued. In June, the Museum displayed a sample of material which was used to make the Queen's coronation gown which had proved very popular. An order had been placed for the community case and it was hoped this would be installed later in the year.

Visitor figures were slightly above the target. There was some disparity in the figures which was due to the Easter holidays being earlier in the year. The level of donations was down, but this was thought to be in part due to the lack of an admin officer. The number of visitors to the website had shot up. School visits were still limited to those which were self-guided.

The Curator informed members that the Museum had recently helped to organise a one-day outreach programme at the Guildhall in Thaxted for a Viking ring found in the area. The event had been successful with around 150 people attending from 11am until 4pm. There were plans to hold similar events if the Museum was successful in acquiring certain items.

In response to a question by Councillor Light, the Curator said that any changes to the website would not be reflected in the viewing figures as they had taken place after June. Then, in response to a question by Mr Watson, the Assistant Director Corporate Services said that it may be possible to use Google Analytics to see when people moved from the Museum's website to the Society's and which pages were the most looked at.

The report was noted.

MM5

DISPOSALS FROM THE COLLECTION – VERBAL REPORT

The Curator presented three items which had been disposed from the collection after approval by the Society. She had brought them before the working group so they could be properly minuted as part of the accreditation process.

The first two items were documents relating to land in Devon and in Horsham, which had been loaned out since 1965 and 1978 respectively. These loans were required to be renewed every five years. Neither item was of any relevance to Uttlesford, or the Museum's Collections Development Policy, so deaccession for both items was seen as justified.

The final item was a collapsible carriage canopy. The canopy was in very poor condition and was a risk to other collections. It had been disposed of through normal refuse services.

Members said they agreed with the deaccessions and disposal.

The report was noted.

MM6 SHIREHILL STORE AND COLLECTION – VERBAL UPDATE

The Curator provided an update on progress at the Shirehill Store. There was some backlog of collections, but broadband was now working within the Store and volunteers could now come in on Mondays. There was a need to build on the work programme and this was a service priority.

MM7 SCHOOLROOM VACATION AND LEASING – VERBAL UPDATE

The Curator provided an update on the vacation of the Schoolroom, which she said had been vacated in June. There were still some items which needed to be removed, but they would not impede the contractor's work. The Assistant Director IT and Facilities and Martin Stocks would be managing the project.

Members discussed the process of leasing the Schoolroom, which the Assistant Director Corporate Services said it was hoped would be completed by November. Mr Watson added that the Society would have to agree to change the terms of the lease so that the Room could be sub-let.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services explained that the process could be slowed down as the Council's legal department was currently stretched and the Assistant Chief Executive - Legal would be retiring at the beginning of August.

MM8 MUSEUM DEVELOPMENTS AND FORWARD PLAN – VERBAL UPDATE

The Curator provided an update on potential developments at the Museum and the forward plan. The Museum would be looking at its resources and the grants that it could apply for.

The first step was to ensure that the Museum had a learning officer and someone who could help with audience development. The Museum would then be looking to hire someone on a fixed term contract to document collections.

In the longer term the aim was to improve and extend the Museum, but the more basic work had to be completed first. SHARE would be running a cohort on applying for grants which started in September. The Curator had already signed up for the cohort, but it was recommended that two people attended. Normally the other person was a Member of the Society. Mr Watson said the Society would consider this at their next meeting.

The Curator said an updated version of the forward plan would be prepared for Cabinet to consider in the winter. In response to a question by the Chairman

about audience development, the Curator explained that in order to secure lottery funding the Museum needed to reach groups. This could be achieved by organising pop-up exhibitions and by finding out what groups such as schools wanted from the Museum.

The Chairman said that he was pleased to see the work on the Castle was continuing. In reply, Mr Watson said that the redevelopment of the Castle was part of the bigger picture. There was a need to look at what the Museum wanted to achieve, and the needs of any potential partners before it began to look at any new buildings. Next year was probably now too soon to look at this element of the forward plan.

The Curator added that it was important the Museum demonstrated that it could work effectively with other organisations in order to improve the likelihood of receiving grant awards.

The Chairman thanked the Curator, other Museum staff and all the volunteers for the work they had put in to help with the move to the Shirehill store and with the day to day operation of the Museum. He would be writing a letter to the local newspapers. Councillor Light seconded the comments made by the Chairman.

MM9

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 12 October.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm.