

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at SHIREHILL STORE
SAFFRON WALDEN at 6pm on 12 October 2016**

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)
Councillor B Light, Councillor G Sell (Uttlesford District Council)
Mr A Watson, Mr R Priestley, Mr P Walker and Mr P Salvidge
(Museum Society Limited)

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director Corporate Services), K Vinton
(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 Councillor Wells.

MM2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 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 flagged up David Laing's retirement; Cllr Chambers asked the Council write to thank David for his contribution to the Society. Mr Watson informed members of the sad death of Molly Glover, Life Vice President, he would attend her funeral on behalf of the Society.

The report was noted.

MM4 QUARTERLY REPORT JULY – SEPTEMBER - REPORT

The Curator apologised for the late circulation of the paper and summarised the main points of the report.

Work continued at the Shire Hill store on Mondays and staff had begun to sort out the back log of collections and documentation.

First stage of the geophysics report of the Castle site from Stratascan was available, a meeting on 25th October would be held with archaeological colleagues, council staff and Historic England to look at the results, the report would then be passed to ECC for further research, the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy Service would be an important piece of work towards the development and interpretation of the site. A grant claim of £5,000 had been submitted into Essex Heritage Trust, this would cover 5 of the 6 costs of the development work.

Wendy-Jo Atter continued to work through the large backlog of administration.

A considerable amount of work had been done on the central heating system over the summer and arrangements for the installation of wi-fi throughout the museum had been made.

13 acquisitions had been recorded for this quarter, including a medieval gold brooch from Manuden purchased by the Museum Society which had to be collected from the British Museum.

A number of late Saxon, Viking and Norman items had been loaned to Epping Forest District Museum in order to celebrate the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings as Harold II local connections.

The Object of the Month continued to be popular and had drawn visitors via Twitter, Facebook and the Museum website.

Mr Watson had produced a number of new model trees to replace those in the exhibit on woodland and tree management.

The Magna Carta exhibition opened on 16th July and had showcased local community embroideries depicting the involvement of Essex Barons.

The reported visitor figures had been disappointing for the last quarter, it was thought outreach activities had impacted on the numbers.

Ashdon and Hadstock had played a major role in the battle of *Assandun* 1016 event, with the support from an ECC grant and a small community grant from Uttlesford District Council alongside ward funding from Cllr Rolfe and a great deal of local sponsorship and help in kind, all contributions made the event a successful project.

The Curator commented on the lost opportunities to follow up outreach as they no longer had a Learning Officer; this had also affected school visits.

Publicity had been very busy, with lots of free publicity on the web and through local press. Visits to the Museum website continued at a good level.

Independent school visits had continued to be encouraged, during term time although the planned summer programme experienced a drop in attendance when the weather improved in August.

The Curator reported over the next two weeks Museum staff would be working with valuers from Arts Appraisals Limited, laid ground work for a major re-evaluation for insurance purposes, this would be assisted by a £5,000 grant from the Museums Valuations Collections Trust.

There would be a large intake of archaeology starting in November, resulting in between 150 to 200 archives it is hoped the store would have the capacity to take the backlog on behalf of the district.

A small private grant from the Museum Society would allow the recruitment of a learning volunteer to sort and list the educational and handling collections, these would be re-packed into small boxes covering the main key stage topics ready for school loans.

Councillor Sell congratulated the Museum for their support, without their efforts the commemoration of the battle of *Assendun* would not have happened.

Councillor Sell noted the explanation on the outreach work and the facts about the Learning Officer. He quoted the visitor figures were down by a third on the previous year and asked in which quarter most people had visited. The Curator explained visitor figures varied from quarter to quarter and depended on what staffing and funding was available in order to put on major events and activities.

Last year the Museum opened the community of collectors which was a locally well supported exhibition and the Magna Carta exhibition had seen a reasonable throughput of visitors. Families visited when activities were put on, other visitors called in when new exhibitions were advertised, and good weather had an effect on attendance.

Councillor Chambers added his congratulations to the Museum staff for the all the work they had done.

The report was noted.

MM5

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr Watson said there had been a meeting with the Fry Art Gallery and conversations were ongoing and they hoped to link up with St Mary's Church on future projects.

The Curator presented a draft paper produced for the Heritage Lottery Fund. The paper highlighted the vision for the Museum and Castle site as a Heritage Hub for North Essex and would be sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Curator and Mr Walker attended a cohort meeting in Stowmarket on how to make lottery applications; this event included a future one-to-one advisory meeting in Saffron Walden and further cohort meetings in December and March.

Mr Watson said advice from the Heritage Lottery Fund was to make a large bid for a community project, including other local partners like the Fry, the Castle, Museum and others.

Richard Auty, Assistant Director Corporate Services reported The Fry Art Gallery had confirmed it was still interested in leasing of the Museum school room; the council had received a letter of intent and had spoken to the Museum Society solicitor. The next stage was to draw up a draft lease.

Councillor Light said the Heritage Hub sounded an exciting project, she added the bid from the Museum had to jump off the page; members agreed the project would gather momentum as other partners joined in. The Museum Society recognised the application would be in competition with other projects in Essex,

like the Southend Museum planned for the sea front, which was applying for a £30million grant.

Councillor Sell also agreed the term of Heritage Hub sounded good, he added in his view the Castle site was an underutilised historic asset. He asked for clarification on the fixed term curatorial post, the Curator confirmed the cost was to be externally funded via the Lottery application, the learning and outreach role would also be funded through the application if the council was unable to provide funding directly.

The Curator reiterated the longer term project would not go ahead until the smaller access to collections project laid the ground work for the Heritage Hub, the Museum would look for a steer from Lottery officers on how to take the application forward.

Councillor Sell asked about the Museum Society's finances if the Lottery application was successful. Mr Walker said taken in consideration the half a million match funding this would leave approximately £80k.

Councillor Chambers asked if the Museum had considered sponsorship, the Curator confirmed they had considered sponsorship and found very little was available. Councillor Chambers asked if it would be improper to ask someone on behalf of the Museum for sponsorship, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services took the view it would not be inappropriate to approach interested people, he added Heritage England had been involved in a lot of joint working around the Castle site for completion March 2017.

Councillor Sell suggested an approach to Lord Sainsbury's Charitable Trust, as he had links to Saffron Walden.

Deborah Priddy, Historic England Inspector would attend a meeting with officers on the archaeological and geophysics on 25th October 2015, this would be an opportunity for the first discussions around plans for the Castle site.

It was confirmed the work to West and North walls of the Castle had been signed off and the scaffolding would be moved round to other side of the Castle site. The Council had secured another £140k from Heritage England; with an additional £100k from Uttlesford District Council work on the other two walls would start, with completion of the soft capping of the walls in 2017 in order to reopen the Castle site, this would result in the Castle coming off the Scheduled Monuments at Risk Register. Information boards would be erected to explain what work had been completed; none of the restoration work would be hidden from view. The Castle site could be promoted for weddings, as part of the heritage trail, performances and other activities.

The report was noted.

MM6

WALDSTOCK 2017 – VERBAL UPDATE

Waldstock organisers would like to use the Castle site as the venue for their next event. The event would be an informal outdoors family weekend at the end of July and would feature local bands. The organising committee would talk to

the relevant agencies regarding security and licensing, and would be raising money for local charities, the Museum Society would also receive a donation towards the Museum development.

MM7 LEARNING OFFICER – VERBAL UPDATE

Richard Auty gave an update on the budgetary position of the Learning Officer post. A growth bid would be submitted for the post and it would go forward into the discussion for the 2017/18 Council budget.

MM8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 1 February 2017.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm.