

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at the SCHOOL ROOM, SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM at 6pm on 30 APRIL 2014

Present: Councillor D Morson (Chairman)
Councillor H Rolfe
R Priestley and A Watson (Museum Society Limited)

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

MM27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eden, D Laing and P Salvidge.

In the absence of Councillor Eden it was agreed that Councillor Morson would be the Chairman.

MM28 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2014

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

MM29 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

MM30 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT (JANUARY – MARCH)

The Curator presented her report and highlighted the points below.

Staffing – The new Collections Officer for Human History had begun employment.

Flooding – The recent flooding had caused minimal damage to artefacts in the Newport store. Staff spent one week clearing damage caused by the flooding. She thanked Mick Lench, Leo and Stev the cleaner for their help.

Acquisitions and Disposals – Grant aid had enabled the Museum Society to acquire all the items of treasure available.

Visitor Figures – The number of visitors had fallen slightly compared to the same period last year. This was due to Monday closures. School visits improved after half term.

Temporary Exhibitions – The Re-Imagining Egypt exhibition closed on 23 February after attracting over 3,000 visitors. The Secrets from the Stores exhibition opened on 8 March.

Publicity , Marketing and Website – The Museum had received a donation totalling £511.57 from Jacqui Portway and her campaign to commemorate Flossie Gedney. This included a donation of £321 had been made by Waitrose from their monthly community fund appeal and the money would be spent on chairs for visitors and free-standing bicycle racks in memory of Flossie. Page views for the Museum's website were 2,698 for the previous quarter.

MM31 **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr Watson informed the Working Group that funding was secured allowing the acquisition of five treasure items. Expenditure was in excess of £61,000. The Society hosted an event to thank "Finders and Funders" on 4 April. Attendance totalled 66 people including Council officers and Councillor J Ketteridge.

MM32 **HORSE DRAWN VEHICLES**

The Curator told the Working Group that a six month extension had been negotiated on the Museum Society's rent agreement to store the horse-drawn vehicles at Whittensmere. The Jobmasters wagon had been transferred to Burwell Museum and it was expected that the hand-drawn hearse from Langley and the Essex Hay Wagon would be accommodated in the new store at Shirehill. This left two tip carts and the brougham to be disposed of (although Audley End were considering one tip cart for their working horse). Cheffins had said they would offer a reduced commission rate of 10 percent if the carts were sold in July. The deadline for entries to this sale was 20 June. A form had to be completed for the Museum Association. Disposal of the carts required the Society's formal approval.

The members of the Working Group agreed to submit a request to the Society to dispose of the carts in question.

AGREED that a request would be submitted to the Museum Society to grant approval for the disposal of the carts.

MM33 **ACCREDITATION**

The Curator said the accreditation report had to be completed every five years. It had to be submitted by 15 June. The Forward Plan would have to be sent as it is. The Collectors Development Plan had to be resubmitted as the template had been changed. There would probably be an assessment visit in early autumn. Due to the hybrid management structure of the museum service and Museum Management Working

Group, they did not fit the template for the accreditation paperwork. The Societies constitution and details of the arrangement would be sent alongside the relevant documents.

The Director of Corporate Services informed the Working Group that since it did not have decision making powers, any action would need to be approved by the Executive. Cabinet did not meet until 17 June so the decision would have to be made by Councillor J Ketteridge. Powers could be delegated to certain members of the Working Group to complete the documents before asking for approval from Councillor J Ketteridge.

AGREED that:

- Councillor Eden and Mr Watson would be given delegated powers to deal with documents related to accreditation.
- Documents would be submitted to Councillor J Ketteridge in early June for approval.

MM34 STORE UPDATE

The Working Group was informed by the ICT and Corporate Support Team Manager that construction of the store was still ahead of schedule and budget. There could be a need for additional lighting but even if additional lighting was required, construction of the store would still be in budget. Ron Pridham and his crew should be thanked for their work on the store.

In response to questions from members, the Director of Corporate Services said members would be invited to view the store when the staircase was installed. The cost of racking would be between £100,000 and £200,000. One-off funding could be available. He would raise the issue with Councillor J Ketteridge.

In response to a question from Councillor Rolfe, the Curator said that very little of the racking from the existing store could be used in the new store. The racking that can be transferred would be used on the upper floor.

MM35 HOUSE AT 40 CASTLE STREET

The Director of Corporate Services said the initial plan to rent out the property had changed and instead the Society had agreed to sell it and invest the proceeds to provide financial support to the museum's revenue budget equivalent to the rent.

Mr Watson told members that the house had been valued by Cheffins at £500,000 and were willing to reduce their commission rate to one percent. There had been 26 viewings and six offers that met the asking

price. The people who had met the asking price would be contacted and asked to give their highest possible offer by 6 May. The accepted offer would be circulated. There was still one issue that needed to be resolved. The telephone cables for the house passed through the museum.

The Director of Corporate Services elaborated upon the cable issue. BT had said they would need to dig up the road in order to resolve the issue. This would be costly. Virgin could be contacted to see if they could solve the problem more cheaply.

Mr Watson said that before any contract was entered into, the Council would have to surrender the lease of the property.

MM36 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Working Group was informed that Scrutiny Committee had agreed to add the Castle and Museum site improvements to its work programme for 2014/15.

MM37 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 18 June.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm.