

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE - UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL, COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2017 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor R Chambers (Chairman)
Councillors B Light, G Sell and L Wells

Also present: R Priestley, P Walker and T Watson (Museum Society Representatives)

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Officer) and Wingfield (Curator - Saffron Walden Museum)

MMG9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Ranger and P Salvidge.

MMG10 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 28 JUNE 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2017 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

MMWG1 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors *Light* and Sell, P Salvidge, R Auty and R Priestly.

MMG11 CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT JULY - SEPTEMBER 2017 (VERBAL)

The Curator presented her quarterly report for July to September 2017.

Learning and Outreach Officer

The Learning and Outreach Officer had begun her term of employment on 11 September and the appointment had already made a positive impact on the number of school bookings made with the Museum. The Curator was pleased with the appointment and more would be said under Items 5 and 6.

Health & Safety

The faulty security shutter had been replaced, thanks to the help provided by the housing repairs service.

The asbestos assessment of the museum's collection had progressed following completion of the procurement process.

A museum specific firearms license had been acquired, replacing the system whereby the Curator held a personal license which was deemed inappropriate.

Collections

The Museum had acquired four items of treasure in the quarter which had been used for the 'Treasure 20 project', a celebration of the twenty year anniversary of the Treasure Act. To mark the celebration the Museum would be utilising social media and one item of treasure a week would be 'tweeted' for twenty weeks, as well as being posted on the museum's website. The Curator said the project had been greatly helped by an intern who had boosted the museum's social media presence. Councillor Light said the work that the intern had accomplished was important and asked how the Museum was going to approach social media now she had left. Mr Watson said the Museum Society would discuss this at their next meeting and perhaps there was some funding available for internship expenses, due to the income generated through renting the old school room. The Curator added that there were ways to utilise the skills of interns all year round, such as running projects during holiday times or weekends. The Chairman said the Museum was doing the right thing by focusing on social media, which was particularly important if the Museum wanted to engage with young people.

The conservation of a silk reticule, produced to commemorate the abolition of slavery, would be going ahead. Financial support had come in the form of grants and private donations.

With the help of volunteers, the Natural Science items of bird eggs and molluscs had been transferred to the Shire Hill storage facility.

The Museum was considering the procurement of twelve gold coins found hidden in a piano which had been made in Saffron Walden. The Museum would also like to acquire the piano and were looking into fundraising options, including crowd funding through social media. In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Curator said the coins were of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and the Museum would like to acquire samples from both periods. The Chairman asked how much the piano and coins were likely to cost. The Curator said the coins would cost around £5,000 whilst the piano, and associated costs, could be anywhere in between £5,000 and £10,000. Councillor Sell said the story was particularly interesting due to the local connection, and thought an article in the Uttlesford Life magazine would be a good way to generate publicity.

Recent Events and Visitor Figures

The 'Life in the Ice Age' Exhibition which had opened in August had been a success. The Stone Age day, where visitors could engage with a re-enacted prehistoric man, had been well attended.

Museum visitor figures were an improvement on the same quarter last year and had exceeded the quarterly target of 4,000. The takings at the shop, ticket sales and website visits had also increased, although there had been a slight fall in donations compared to the same quarter last year.

Upcoming Events

1 November – Saffron Walden Art Society - Afternoon Reception

The Saffron Walden Art Society had funded the purchase of a medieval silver seal matrix which had been found in Great Hallingbury. A reception had been organised to display the piece to its members.

26 November – Ice Age Day

An event had been planned in partnership with Saffron Screen cinema. The family film Ice Age would be shown to coincide with the museum's Ice Age exhibition, and a promotion would be on offer for those families who also had cinema tickets. The Curator was pleased that the Museum was still finding new ways to attract broader audiences.

8 March – Chairman's Charity Event

With the help of Councillor Sell, Chairman of Uttlesford District Council, the Museum was hosting an event with the Chairman's chosen charities; Support for Sight and the Essex Wildlife Trust. Councillor Sell said he hoped the event would raise the profile of the Museum and the charities involved.

The Chairman thanked the Curator for the update.

MMG12 APPROACH TO THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND (VERBAL)

The Assistant Director - Corporate Services updated Members on the museum's approach to the HLF application.

The Assistant Director - Corporate Services and the Curator had met with a representative from the HLF to discuss the two applications the Museum was considering. She had provided useful feedback on both bids and the Museum was now considering three bids, having received further information relating to a resilience fund the Museum could apply for.

The two projects discussed in relation to the resilience bid were a skills gap analysis; and an appraisal of development plans.

The Heritage Stories of North West Essex bid would have to be revisited. The regional pot was not particularly large and fundraising would have to be considered as an option. Cuts to the project and compromises would have to be made, such as not employing a project designer. The Curator added that there was still hope funding could be secured due to the high quality of learning experience provided, which offered the fund good value for money. The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said the North West Essex bid was at the high end of the HLF scale, and if a lower bid was submitted it would be more likely to succeed. In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Assistant

Director – Corporate Services said the current bid amounted to 45% of the total regional fund. Mr Watson said there was much preparation work to be done before the bid could be submitted. The Curator added that a dialogue had now been established with the HLF and if they had any questions they could now run them past their contact at the HLF.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell, the Curator said the next step would be to ascertain if the Museum would put in one or two bids, and then to carry out the preparation work for the North West Essex bid. She hoped this would be accomplished by the early stages of next year. The Assistant Director – Corporate Services said if the bids were unsuccessful then the Museum could reapply, utilising the advice gained from the failed bids to ensure at least some funding was attained. Mr Watson added that it was a complicated process but each bid secured would provide the foundations for the next stage in the museum's development.

MMG13 LEARNING AND OUTREACH OFFICER (VERBAL)

The Curator said she was pleased that a new Learning and Outreach Officer had been appointed. The appointee was full of energy and ideas, and there had already been an increase in the number of school bookings for the last quarter.

MMG14 REVISION TO MUSEUM FEES AND CHARGES

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services presented the Museum Fees and Charges report to Members.

In light of the recent appointment of a Learning and Outreach Officer, the Museum had decided to revise its fees and charges, specifically with regards to the new service of delivering taught learning sessions in schools, Loan Boxes and promotional events.

The taught sessions would be a new service by which the Learning and Outreach Officer would attend schools in the district with items from the education and handling collection. The rates charged would be competitive in comparison to similar services and there would be no change to the fee charged for sessions taught in the Museum.

There would also be a revised charge for the Schools 'Loan Boxes' scheme, which would include significant improvements to the contents, presentation and packaging. This would be rolled out during the autumn of 2017.

To allow the Museum to determine its participation in promotional events, where the ticket pricing fell outside of published fees and charges, it would be necessary to approve the delegation of authority to the Section 151 Officer. By doing so the Museum could take advantage of promotional events to gain publicity and broaden the Museum's audience, without having to gain approval from Cabinet on each occasion.

The Chairman said this was a good idea but asked if the MMWG would be consulted on one-off promotional events. The Assistant Director of Corporate Services said that this was possible.

Councillor Sell said being involved in promotional events would be positive for the Museum. The Essex Pass, whereby members paid an annual fee to gain access to various institutions in Essex, was a particularly good idea as it encouraged people to visit heritage sites across the district.

RESOLVED that the Museum Management Working Group recommends to Cabinet:

- The fees for taught sessions in schools are set at £120 (£100 + £20 VAT) for a morning and £210 (£175 + £35 VAT) for a full day.
- The revised loan box charge to be set at £18 (£15 + £3 VAT).
- That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to approve variations to published entrance fees, in consultation with the Curator.

MMG15 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed the next meeting would take place on 23 January 2018.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm.