

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2018 at 6.00 pm

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

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), A Mawson (Democratic Services Officer), A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services) and C Wingfield (Curator - Saffron Walden Museum)

Also in attendance: T Watson, R Priestley and P Salvidge (Museum Society Members)

MMG7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

MMG8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

MMG9 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Working Group considered the report from the Chairman of the Museum Society.

MMG10 MUSEUM CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT JULY-SEPTEMBER 2018

The Working Group considered the quarterly report from the Curator. The Curator drew to the Group's attention the following specific points.

Staffing

The museum had returned to a full staffing team, there had been changes to implement an additional two permanent weekend posts, which were ring fenced for existing casual staff. New arrangements would start in December to stabilise the opening hours.

Volunteers

A special thank you had been given to all the volunteers for their hard work.

Buildings and site

Contractors had been tasked with the carpark and driveway, the parking bays had been repainted and it is hoped this would encourage more consistent parking. The rotten wood from the exterior of the windows had been removed and replaced. There was a lot of ongoing work, including security to the building.

Health & Safety

A quotation was being sought to upgrade the fire alarm system to a 'double knock' system, currently the fire service doesn't attend unless specifically called.

Collections

The ceramics gallery would be packed away for a few months to allow for decoration works, and the Museum had been loaned some packing crates from Audley End, English Heritage.

The Curator extended an invitation to the reception on the 30th to hear the 'piano hoard' piano being played for the first time, between 6-7pm,

The fallen plaster frieze had since been repaired and replaced.

Visitor figures & Income

The Museum had been quiet in the heatwave. This had been a common experience for a lot of museums across the region. The visitor figures were 17% under target despite an active calendar.

School visits were not as abundant as desired, it was noted that a school visit was a strain financially and logistically for the schools themselves, and that the museum was unable to facilitate large school groups.

The shop income had increased, so those that were visiting were spending in the shop, the Museum were looking to move to Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) and card reader in the future as more and more customers were expecting cashless transactions.

The Curator invited questions from the members.

Councillor Sell asked if it was possible to get a letter of thanks issued from the Museum to Mrs Mary Knight for recognition of her long service as a volunteer.

Councillor Sell asked that now the heatwave was over what the figures were starting to look like?

The Curator said she didn't have access to up to date figures to advise. She said that they had now had their last organised event of 2018 and that in particular schools were preparing for their end of term festivities.

Cllr Sell offered up some ideas for promotion of the museum with schools, local groups and care homes, and the Curator was invited to approach him outside the meeting to discuss further. The Curator supplied a leaflet for all which has been sent to schools with a covering letter.

Councillor Sell asked about the age range of the group visitors, the Curator said that they had majority of primary school aged children however ages vary and they had hosted a WI group recently.

Councillor Light asked about the listings on page 7 of the report, and said that she could offer a link to the Saffron Walden bid as she was on the Steering Group, and would happily talk to them.

Councillor Chambers asked if the water issue at the store had been resolved, and the Curator confirmed that it had and that no damage had occurred.

Councillor Light asked about the Museum's planned outdoor events, and the Curator advised her of the planned events, the Members discussed the logistics of trying to get people into the museum to pay for outdoor events when the access had to be maintained to the public for tennis courts.

MMG11 ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

ACCREDITATION AND HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

The Curator had been expecting a letter in November to invite the Museum to reapply for accreditation. There was then a 6-month window for the Museum to submit. Arts Council England (ACE) had now published a new timetable on its website, which showed that due to the backlog, the Museum had now been assigned to 'Batch 8' which meant that the Museum would not get its letter of invitation until January 2020, and would need to submit a new Accreditation return by July 2020. The review would not be in a hurry therefore taking the pressure off the Museum staff and allowing them the time to prepare the application.

The Curator spoke about a number of other funding streams including the Heritage Lottery Fund, and that fundraising was a major ongoing project for the Museum. After useful discussions with the HLF, she hoped to submit an application for a Resilient Heritage grant by 18 January 2019 when the scheme closed. If successful, this would provide funding for audience development and feasibility studies amongst other things, as essential groundwork for future developments.

Councillor Chambers thanked Museum staff and volunteers.

MMG12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman asked that the date be ascertained in the next month for the next meeting in the New Year.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm.