

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM -
HTTPS://ZOOM.US/, on WEDNESDAY, 14 JULY 2021 at 6.00 pm**

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman, N Gregory and B Light

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

Also Present: K Eden, C Sharpe and T Watson (Museum Society)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from R Priestley and P Salvidge (Museum Society).

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Museum Society Chairman presented his report. He was very pleased that the Castle had re-opened.

The Chair asked if there was any evidence that people were visiting both the Castle and Museum in one visit. The Curator said that it was not easily measured, but she hoped the family activities planned in August would continue to bring the two sites together.

She said that when the next 6 month leaflet was published for the museum, it would include details of the Castle and this would also be publicised on the Council's website.

4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT

The Curator presented her quarterly report and apologised that it had not been circulated sooner.

She highlighted the following:-

- The museum was currently open Thursday to Sunday on reduced hours. This was because of the need for additional cleaning to take place, and to

allow for recruitment and training of volunteers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays

- Online booking was available but due to capacity visitors had also been able to buy tickets at the door.
- There were training issues for current volunteers on the new cashless payment system and the need for further recruitment.
- As soon as new volunteers were in place and trained the museum would open to extended days starting from Tuesday rather than Thursday.
- The Museum agreed to administer bookings for the Castle, major events had to be checked to see if the Scheduled Monuments Consent applied.
- Visitor figures had been circulated, there were 532 visitors since the 20th May, which included 100 school children through school visits.
- Tickets purchased on line were 85 in May and 85 in June.
- Walk up visitor tickets were 87 in May and 275 in June.
- Income from the shop, admission, donations box and a £60 fee from a talk, totalled £1350.
- An extra £378 was generated from learning services.

In response to a question from the Chair the Curator said that volunteers had left for a number of reasons mainly due to re-organising their priorities after the pandemic and for a small number concern about using the digital technology.

The Curator said that two new volunteers had been recruited, one more was due to be interviewed and there were a further two in the pipeline.

The Chair suggested that requests for volunteers could be put into the Stansted Link. The Curator offered to provide some text.

The Curator said she hoped to extend the hours to 10am – 5pm after the 19th July 2021.

In response to a question from Councillor Freeman the Chairman of the Museum said that they had actioned a number of talks on zoom and would continue to do so. The Chair asked if this could be communicated to Democratic Services and added to the Members Bulletin.

The Curator said she would be taking bookings for hire of the Castle and grounds for private and public events, but the Museum did not have the resources to run and organise events on behalf of hirers.

Councillor Freeman suggested that open air Shakespeare plays would be a good use of the Castle grounds.

The Curator said the Pantaloons had been due to perform Shakespeare at the Castle for free in an experimental run, which was unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic. The Curator said she would get back in touch with them.

Councillor Armstrong said he supported ideas that meant local facilities were used and more people came to the area from outside of the district. He said it was important to consider the whole of the district.

Councillor Gregory said that Councillor Reeve had a budget for economic development which could be used to spread events through the district especially into Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted.

5 **REVISED MUSEUM MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT**

The Curator said the agreement had come to the last meeting and had been revised to include the Shire Hill Store. The other main change was to reverse the order of names so that Uttlesford District Council was first and the Museum Society was second in order to make it clear to the Arts Council who had the overall responsibility for the Museum.

AGREED: To recommend that Cabinet approve the revised Museum Management Agreement between Uttlesford District Council and Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd.

6 **MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Development Committee gave a verbal update for the meeting:-

- The timetable for works to be completed at the Museum was 2026/27.
- The Museum Society had a budget of £500k.
- The total budget needed was £3.5m, with the National Heritage Lottery bid to contribute in the region of £2m. Another £850/£900k would be raised through trusts and other organisations. The balance raised by the Society would be through an appeals function.
- There had been a positive response from the National Heritage Lottery who was willing for the Museum to start the process.
- Dr Tipper from Historic England would help to steer the way forward and said that it was essential that the Museum and Castle were seen as one heritage site.
- Historic England had been made aware that the Tennis Club leased its land from the Audley End Estate and so this part of the site was outside the Council's and Museum Society's control.
- A Laser survey needed to take place and there would be a Contractor appointed for this, subject to discussions and guidance from Historic England in a meeting to be held at the end of July.
- A professional Project Manager would be recruited.

In response to a question from the Chair the Chairman of the Development Committee said that he did not know yet what the Museum would look like at the end of the project but it needed to be a more efficiently manageable museum.

7 **DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.**

The date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 20th October at 6.00pm

The meeting ended at 7.00pm