

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at Zoom on
WEDNESDAY, 12 APRIL 2023 at 6.00 pm**

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors R Freeman and B Light

Museum Society: K Eden, D Kent, R Priestley, C Sharpe and T Watson

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong and Gregory.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th January 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIR'S REPORT (VERBAL)

The Chair provided a verbal report. He said that the National Heritage Lottery Fund project relied on a number of surveys being completed (partly for Historic England) and it was unlikely that there would be much progress until the start of next year, 2024.

He said that the digital strategy was going well and had moved more quickly and had cost less than was expected.

4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT

The Curator presented the interim report for quarter 4, January to March 2023 and she highlighted the following: -

- The full report would be available next week and would be circulated to the Working Group.
- The visitor's figures were 2,215, and did not yet include the user figures, so it had been a good quarter.
- The TELA design work of updating the website and refreshing its design had a total cost of £5k which had been paid by the Museum Society. A saving of £1k had been made through a SHARE Museums East of England grant.

- A date for the castle to be re-opened was awaited, but it had been agreed that the grass area could be used for the Coronation and there was also a repeat booking in July.
- The exhibition 'Feeding the Family' opened on 1st April with a private view on 31st March; it had been well received.
- The Museum had received the first digital entries for the art exhibition 'Uttlesford Open 2023'. The Museum had been working with the Planning department and the theme for the artwork was a 'sense of place'.
- The temporary display of the centenary of the Ashdon meteorite fall in 1923 had continued to have a large number of visits on the website but it was difficult to know how this translated into actual visits on foot.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Curator said that the Coronation would have a similar set up as the Platinum Jubilee with an outdoor live screening by the castle, in collaboration with Saffron Walden Town Council and Mack Productions.

The Chair was pleased that the Museum were working in partnership with other organisations like the Gibson library and the food bank and were providing a better experience for people coming to the Museum.

The Chair said that there was a lot of public money being spent on the castle and asked when it would be reopened.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services said that there had been some issues with modern repair work on the Castle, it had started to breakdown and some flints from the walls had fallen. He said that this was due to a very hot summer and other similar ancient monuments had the same issues. He said that there would be a meeting this week on site and the Castle would reopen as soon as possible. He said that signage would be put up asking visitors to be careful.

The Curator said that she hoped the Harris fencing would be removed before the King's Coronation.

The Chair said that he was impressed by the work that had been carried out at the Museum by the Curator's team, volunteers and the Museum Society, especially the constant reinvention and new ideas that were implemented. He thanked everyone involved.

Councillors Light and Freeman added their thanks and said that considering the size of the Museum it provided a brilliant resource for the community.

5 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING.**

To be agreed after the election.

The meeting ended at 6.37pm