

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 14 JANUARY 2019 at 6.00 pm

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

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)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Wells and Paul Salvidge.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Museum Society Chairman delivered his report.

Councillor Sell said that he had attended the evening event for The Piano Hoard (913 gold sovereign and half-sovereign coins were discovered in Shropshire, hidden inside a piano which was originally supplied by Beaven & Mothersole Piano Tuners, who were based in 27 West Road, Saffron Walden). He said that it was a good event.

The Museum Society Chairman said that the last two meetings had had a good attendance.

4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT

The Museum Curator delivered her quarterly report (appended to the minutes) and drew the group's attention to the following points;

The museum has benefitted from having a full staff team for the last quarter; the weekend staffing changes have been made. The Museum now has permanent weekend staff to stabilise weekends and bank holidays.

The Museum had had upgrades to their connectivity as they had been suffering long term problems that were out of the control of UDC. Connectivity for an external site being of extreme importance; thanks were passed on to the IT department. The installation however left the museum with no connection for a

week before the Christmas break which had had an impact on productivity; however with the new connection and speeds the Curator was confident that a new era had begun.

The Museum is waiting for the completion of the window works, the Curator is pressing for completion as the scaffolding is still up.

The Curator said that the ceramics gallery redecoration is due to start this week.

A substantial quote for a new fire alarm system that would call the emergency services if two of the site's detectors were triggered has been received and will be discussed with Assistant Director of Corporate Services and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services. A good fire report was received for the Shire Hill store.

The Curator discussed the new exhibitions and events.

The Curator said that the last quarter figures were disappointing and upon informal consultation with other museums it seems that they had also experienced a downturn. The Curator said that they need to find out why people aren't visiting, engage with more schools, off site visits and reconsider how the statistics are collected as there were 90 children that were engaged in an off-site visit which would help with the numbers.

Despite the disappointing visitor figures, shop income had held up and the Curator felt that this was due to marketing and selling initiatives.

The Curator advised that the museum would be investing in a card reader and till to enable the museum to take card payments in the shop and for entry. She said that this would be implemented towards the end of the year to enable sufficient training of the staff and volunteers. In response to a member's question the Curator said that the costs were not high enough to raise concern and that with an improvement in the stock offered in the shop, bespoke items for example, that the cost would be mitigated against.

In response to Councillor Sell the curator advised of the upcoming events and exhibitions advising that the schedule is often planned 18 months in advance. The curator took on ideas from the working group including references to airfields, national services and oral history.

5

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND RESILIENT HERITAGE APPLICATION

The Curator updated the group on the progress of the Heritage Lottery Fund application (Gantt chart appended to the minutes). The application is on target to be submitted on Wednesday 16 January in time for the closure of the scheme on 18 January. If the Museum is unsuccessful then the new funding project can be applied for. The Curator said that there was no financial commitment from UDC, the Museum Society had match funded £10k towards the project and that this had been appreciated and recognised by the group.

The Curator said that she had no idea what the chances of success were, results were expected in March or April, and that further questions were expected before that time.

Thanks were exchanged all round. In response to a Member's question the Curator advised that the application was probably of a medium size for the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In response to a question from Councillor Sell the Curator gave the group a summary of the current staffing team at the museum, and a team structure chart was requested to follow after the meeting.

6 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

Democratic Services to liaise with the group to arrange future meetings.