

MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)
Councillors N Gregory, P Lavelle and B Light

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

Also Present: K Eden, R Priestly and T Watson (Museum Society)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from R Auty.

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 presented his report. He said that there had been a positive meeting with the consultants on 10 February and that a working plan would be taken forward.

4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT Q3 OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2019

The Curator presented her report for the October to December quarter, and highlighted the following areas;

- Accreditation had been delayed and was behind schedule.
- An Interim Forward Plan for 2020-21 had been produced that could be re-worked into a five year plan and this item was on the Agenda.
- A draft Internal Audit report of the Museum Service had just been received.
- There had been one minor breach of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) that had resulted in staff being reminded about protocols and checks when emailing museum volunteers.

- The equivalent of 27 weeks of full-time work had been contributed by all volunteers during the quarter.
- In respect of buildings and site the flat roof work had been completed and some re-turfing works had taken place during the past week.
- There had been an additional 24 acquisitions that included the remainder of material from the Stansted Airport archaeology project.
- The objects of the month were highlighted together with the Special Exhibitions.
- The Local Performance Indicator had shown user figures exceeding the target by 25% mainly due to continuing demand for schools loan and reminiscence boxes. Outreach activities had also extended the Museum's audiences to new participants.
- During the quarter there had been nine events held on site and four outreach activities.
- The main museum activities to note for Quarter 4 were highlighted.

In response to Members' questions about the Castle the Curator said that the intention had originally been to "soft" open but this had been delayed because of the re-turfing works. There would be an opening event held. Historic England was also an important influence. In the future the intention was for the Museum to coordinate bookings for the Castle. Future initiatives by the Heritage Development Group included a celebrity lecture by Professor Lewis and four guided walks. A leaflet on medieval Walden would be published by the Heritage Development Group through the Tourist Information Centre.

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DOCUMENTATION POLICY

The Curator presented the Documentation Policy 2020-2025.

She stated that the Policy had been guided by accreditation and that it described the standards and initiatives needed to advance the key purpose of the Museum's 2020 – 2025 Forward Plan. The Museum's documentation procedures had followed the appropriate Spectrum standards. Priorities for the Modes Complete database had been detailed subject to external funding and / or volunteer support for some projects. Back-ups of all collections data held on computer had been automatically made daily by the Council's IT section.

It was noted that this document would not be put to the Board until 21 April 2020.

AGREED that this document would go forward for Cabinet approval on 1 April 2020.

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DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND FORWARD PLAN

The Curator gave a verbal report on the Development Project and gave a summary of the Museum Service Interim Forward Plan 2020-21.

She said there had been a good workshop held with National Lottery consultants Fourth Street on 10 February 2020. There was a future need to extend eastwards that could include a learning and activity room, a refreshment facility and workspace for curatorial staff. The main public entrance would remain in place to ensure good visitor flow. The “lean-to” building would need to be replaced with a workshop.

Future work included an Audience Development Study that would be undertaken by Julia Holberry Associates which would look to establish a local narrative and take forward the local and global connections. There would be a stall held at Saffron Walden Market on 16 May which would look to put various future proposals to the public. Key dates for meetings were 27 April for Julia Holberry to present audience findings and 15 June for the final project meeting with Fourth Street in respect of the Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study.

At 6.50pm Cllr Gregory apologised that he had to leave the meeting as he had an appointment at the Great Chesterford Parish Council.

The Curator indicated that the Museum Development Committee Board would be looking for up to £6.5m and that any possible National Lottery assistance would be based on regional rather than national funding to a maximum of £5m. The aim would be to put an application to the National Lottery during 2020/21 as well as encouraging local support. Building works would start in 2023 and should take 18 months to be followed by fitting out that could take up to a further 18 months.

Members discussed the necessity for museum closure at some point. This would mean very limited access but promotions could be taken forward around the district utilising items from the Shire Hill Store.

AGREED that the Museum Service Interim Forward Plan 2020-21 would go forward for Cabinet approval on 1 April 2020.

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ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

The possible effects of the coronavirus were discussed and on-going arrangements were under constant review.

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DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

Wednesday 13 May 2020 6.00pm

