

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM, on
WEDNESDAY, 10 MARCH 2021 at 6.00 pm**

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

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

Also present: K Eden, R Priestley, P Salvidge and T Watson (Museum Society).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from C Sharpe (Museum Society).

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th March 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Museum Society Chairman presented his report. He said that it had been a very difficult time for the Museum which had been closed for the majority of the year. All meetings had moved to Zoom and although the monthly talks' programmes had been cancelled there had been 4 successful talks via Zoom.

The Chair said that he wanted to formerly acknowledge the amazing commitment from the Museum Society Chairman, who had been involved with the Museum Society for 50 years since 1971 in a number of roles, most recently as Chairman. He said that he wanted to mark the anniversary and suggested a reception at the Museum. He said that he would talk outside of the meeting to the Curator and the Assistant Director - Corporate Services.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Museum Society Chairman said the membership of the Museum Society was just under 200.

MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORTS

The Curator presented four quarterly reports which were summarised for the full year. She highlighted the following areas:-

- The Museum had been supported by the Museum Society which had provided grants for specific projects including the acquisition of one major treasure which would be displayed on re-opening.
- There had been a brief re-opening before Christmas with bookable tickets; this had tested the new cashless payment system and Covid measures.
- Accreditation had been set back another year by the Arts Council.
- The Resilient Heritage Project funded by the National Lottery had gone ahead and apart from a small delay would be finished by the end of April 2021.
- The Museum had been involved with the Mayflower 400 project enabling some of the Saffron Walden Museum objects to be shown to a much wider audience.
- The Learning and Outreach Officer had set up 'click and collect' packs which had been a great success and also a mini website with learning resources for all ages.
- Materials were being collected from local residents to archive as a record of experiences during the pandemic.
- The Income for the year to date had increased to approximately £2,115 from the £1,450 figure in the report.

The Chair asked if a letter of thanks could be sent to the Learning and Outreach Officer to acknowledge the work put into the 'click and collect' packs which had increased income and had provided good learning resources for the community.

Councillor Light wanted to extend thanks to the Museum Curator and all staff.

The Curator confirmed a provisional opening date of Thursday 20th May 2021 with reduced hours, Thursday to Sunday which would then increase to Tuesday to Sunday after 6 weeks subject to Covid restrictions.

5 MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL AND SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM SOCIETY LTD

The Curator said the agreement needed to be updated to take into account the Shire Hill Store, Arts Council Accreditation, the revised representation of 5 Councillors and 5 Museum Society members as well as other small changes to titles and organisations.

The document was a draft for information but would be brought back to the working group for recommendation to Cabinet and formal approval later in the year.

MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

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

- There had been 3 meetings of the Committee held in the year.
- The Fourth Street report set out a number of options for consideration; he noted that the more capital that had been requested, the greater the requirement to increase income.
- It had been decided that a figure of £3.5m was workable and reduced the risk.
- The Museum Society would contribute £500k of the total £3.5m.
- Better quality drawings would be provided and a laser survey would be carried out.
- A consultant had been appointed to help with the fund raising strategy and in particular to provide guidance on raising private funds.
- A fund raising Director would need to be appointed.
- A business plan would be written later in the year, including a forecast of the funds that would need to be raised.
- The risks would then be reassessed and the amount requested increased if possible.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Chairman of the Development Committee said if they were successful with the £3.5m bid there would be two options available:-

1. To retain the existing building outside but change the inside - by modernisation to enable frequent changes to the exhibitions.
2. To build a small extension to provide extra space for facilities.

Cllr Light, as a member of the Development Committee, said that it would be a phased approach. In the future they hoped to extend further and raised the possibility of providing a café in the current local history gallery.

The Curator said that the lottery funding for larger grants asked for a minimum of 10% match funding, which meant that the society already had the qualifying amounts required for the maximum £5m, even though the decision had been made to apply for the smaller amount of £3.5m.

The Curator said that she had reconsidered having Museum objects displayed in the Café; she had previously seen it at Chelmsford, by the use of show cases placed at a height where they could not be knocked. She thought that it would give any Café a unique Museum feel and become part of the outreach programme.

In response to a comment from the Chair, it was agreed that it was important for the café to be an integral part of the Museum and the Curator said that it was a good way to open up the Museum to other people who were not regular visitors.

The stages and timetable of the process were discussed:-

- To organise the laser survey of the Museum.
- To engage an architect for the stage one plan which the National Lottery would expect to be in place in order to put in the stage one bid.
- To rework the forward plan to 2025.
- The project enquiry for the bid to be submitted in summer 2021.
- To bring the forward plan to this working group in October 2021 and then take to the December 2021 Cabinet meeting for approval.
- To submit the stage one bid In December 2021/January 2022 with the forward plan in place and architect work carried out.

7 DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

It was agreed that in order to fit in with the quarterly reports and items that needed Cabinet approval, the next meetings would be arranged for the middle of July and October 2021.

Publicity for the re-opening of the Museum was discussed and the Chair asked if a press release could be organised.

The Museum Society Chairman thought it would be a good idea to promote the opening of the Castle and the Museum together. The Assistant Director - Corporate Services said that he would find out when the Castle was due to re-open.

The Curator said she had an upcoming meeting with the Heritage Development Group and publicity would be discussed. She hoped there would be a joint approach with the Tourist Information and Fry Art Gallery.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm