

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held at ZOOM, on  
WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021 at 6.00 pm**

Present: Councillor G Sell (Chair)  
Councillors A Armstrong, R Freeman 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, C Sharpe and T Watson (Museum Society).

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Gregory and P Salvidge (Museum Society).

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

**3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Museum Society Chairman said that this was his last meeting as the Chair. He hoped that Keith Eden would be elected as his successor at the upcoming Annual General Meeting.

The Chair said that the Council would write officially to thank him for all his hard work over the 13 years he had been Chairman and that there would be an official event next spring to say thank you.

**4 MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT FOR Q2 JULY- SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Curator said that she had heard from the National Lottery Heritage Fund who had invited the Museum to send a formal application for funding.

She presented her quarterly report and highlighted the following: -

- There had been nearly 450 volunteer hours this quarter and training was on going.
- There were some problems with the heating and boiler at the Museum, but this had been fixed to a satisfactory level and would hopefully continue to work until it was replaced in the future.
- There had been an all-day booking for the castle grounds for a spring wedding next year, subject to the agreement of Historic England.

- The Lost Language of Nature Project continued, and in addition the Museum had been approached by Cultural Engine, who had offered grant money for a possible artist commission to run alongside this project.
- The Museum would be hosting a couple of the Cultural Engine workshops for the Local Plan.
- Events included Snapping the Stiletto and resident artist Heidi Sharp.
- There had been a joint application with Epping Forest for a grant which related to the Anglo-Ethiopian collection, the result was awaited.
- The DNA analysis of archaeological human remains found locally would be reported on more fully in the next quarter.
- Visitor Services
  - There had been 1,663 visitors this quarter which was approximately 50% of pre-covid numbers.
  - Income from shop sales was at a similar pre-covid level, meaning that spend per head had increased. This was most likely due to the new card system, and the better stocking and re-displaying in the shop.
  - The castle grounds had been put to good use with 'crafts at the castle.'
  - Loan boxes had performed well, and school bookings were increasing.
  - In half term the Museum would extend their opening times to Tuesday through to Friday in the week. Going forward the Museum would open to the general public Wednesday through to Friday with Tuesday's set aside for school groups and prebooked activities.

In response to questions from the Chair the Curator said: -

- The 'crafts at the castle' would become a regular feature in the summer.
- There was a policy in respect of human remains which would be circulated. The remains were locked away and were excavated under licence from the Ministry of Justice. The DNA information would be used for medical research and DNA sampling through the Crick Institute.
- The seminars regarding 'our colonial past' did have implications for the Museum and the district but the items in the collections were not seized through military campaigns and were collected within the general colonial framework.
- The Artist in Residence had been successful, it had been a grant funded project which enabled a professional artist to work on the premises.

The Assistant Director - Corporate Services said the Chief Executive would be touring the Museum in the next week or so.

## 5

### **MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Development Committee congratulated the Curator for her work on the initial application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. He said that there were challenges ahead to produce precise details of what was needed, and attention would need to be paid to the comments by the Lottery Fund that some of the costs appeared tight.

6

**DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.**

An extra meeting would take place on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December to consider a Revised Forward Plan for the Museum Service, in preparation for Cabinet on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

The next meeting would take place on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January at 6.00pm.

*The meeting ended at 6.45pm*