

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP held on ZOOM,
on WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2022 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), A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services) 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 Armstrong.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1st December 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3 MUSEUM SOCIETY CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (VERBAL)

The Museum Society Chairman gave a verbal update, he said that although the pandemic had been difficult for the Museum it had coped well.

He made the following points:-

- At the recent Museum Society Board Meeting the treasurer had said that the Museum Society was in a good financial position which was beneficial in the light of the upcoming National Heritage Lottery Fund application.
- His mission for 2022 was to attract young people to the Museum and to the Museum Society, he said it was important for the future of the Museum.

The Chair suggested contacting County High, Joyce Franklin, Dunmow and Felsted schools to see if there would be any interest amongst sixth form students.

Councillor Freeman suggested inviting sixth form students to the talks run by the Museum.

Richard Priestley thought that it was important to have a specific contact in the school to ensure any correspondence got to the right person and was followed up.

The Chair agreed and said that it would be a good idea to invite someone from each of the school's history departments to the next Museum event to help develop the relationship.

The Curator said that the Museum was not able to offer work placements to students as there were not the projects or staff time to monitor and supervise them. She said that there were a series of digital projects that had been devised for students to do at home having visited the Museum and she would consider using sixth formers as tour guides. She said unfortunately the Museum could not take on under 16s due to safeguarding issues.

She said there was a free seminar coming up soon organised through the Regional Museum Organisation called 'Share' to specifically engage young people.

The Chairman of the Museum Society said it was important to relate to students and young people in a way that they were comfortable with and the digital project was therefore a good strategy.

In response to a question from the Chair the Assistant Director – Corporate Services said to contact Fiona Gardiner with regards to the Youth Council.

He thought that the idea raised by the Chair to try and get undergraduate history students involved was good but suggested that unless the project was closely linked to their studies, they might not have the time to be involved.

The Chairman of the Museum Society said that all events and talks would be on zoom until the spring these had been successful and there needed to be some thought on how these would be run in the future.

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MUSEUM CURATOR'S REPORT FOR Q3 OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2021

The Curator presented her report and highlighted the following:-

Since October 2021 the Museum had extended its public opening to pre-Covid opening hours, Wednesday to Sunday with Tuesdays reserved for sessions for school groups and any other large groups or activities.

There were ongoing problems with the building and utilities particularly the heating, this underlined the need to move forward with development plans. She said that some work would need to be carried out in the interim.

The Castle was open but there had not been any events over the winter. Unfortunately, the wedding booking had fallen through but this had nothing to do with the suitability of the Castle as a venue.

There was a minor correction in the list of acquisitions, the watercolour should be named the 'Sun Inn' not the 'Swan Inn'

Snapping the Stiletto continued to be successful in raising awareness of women's role in the district. The 'Radical Women of Saffron Walden' guided walk had been turned into a self-guided leaflet.

Other projects including the CV Walden and Lost Language of Nature were progressing, with the possibility of extra money from the Essex Cultural Diversity project for an artist commission to be the subject of an exhibition later in the year.

For income and visitor numbers Carolyn talked through the following information.

Museum recovery from Covid pandemic

Income and Visitor comparison for Q3 before and after

Income Figures are gross and shown rounded to the nearest £

	Re-opening after Covid Q3 2021/22 October – December 2021	Same quarter pre- pandemic Q3 2019/20 October – December 2019
Total Visitor numbers	1,616	2,334
Admissions income (tickets)	£ 2,140	£ 2,550
Shop (souvenirs and books)	£ 1,381	£ 1,072
Donations Box	£ 65	£ 115
Learning & Outreach (schools, activities, events, booked groups)	£ 1,053	£ 825
Total gross income for Q3	£ 4,639	£ 4,562
Spend per head (shop + donations income / total no. of visitor)	89p	47p

For Q4 2021/22, a 'donation by card payment' option is now available on the till and card reader at the Welcome Desk.

The Curator noted the following:-

Although the visitor numbers were lower the total gross income was slightly higher than pre-pandemic. She said this was down to a number of factors including the Museum taking card payments, the re-display and marketing of the stock, the loan boxes and the activities programme including the popular 'Halloween at Night' event and in the last quarter there had been a talk at Museum Shop Sunday by the local author Rachel Morris regarding her book called 'The Museum Makers'.

A donation can now be made by card at the point of sale.

The number of users for the last quarter had slightly exceeded the set target.

The Chair said that the magazine published in Stansted called 'The Link' had started to digitalise its content, he wondered if there would be some interest in the history of that magazine.

In response to a question from the Chair the Curator said that there would be meetings about the Queens Platinum Jubilee set up by Saffron Walden Town Council. The Museum would be involved with a small display of royal associated items and an activity pack. Two items were of particular interest, a sample embroidery from the Coronation dress worn by the Queen which belonged to a local resident who had been employed by Norman Hartnell. The embroidery featured emblems of the commonwealth countries and a signed book by the author was also included. Secondly a local family from Wimbish had donated a straw plait crown, made by a member of their family who had been a local thatcher at the start of the Queens reign.

The Chair thought that the regional press would be interested in these items.

The Chair asked whether the Curator would consider doing something on education in the district, particularly between the wars as he said it could be of interest to residents and was a way of linking into the schools.

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MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Chairman of the Museum Society said that the work to prepare for the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund would start in approximately 4 weeks.

He said the application was online and was a very comprehensive document. He said he wanted to ensure that the Curator got all the help she needed from the Museum Society. He said the deadline date for the application was 26th May 2022.

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DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting was agreed for Wednesday 27th April at 6.00pm.

The meeting ended at 7.15pm

