

Accreditation : Briefing Note for MMWG

The Arts Council England (ACE) operates the Accreditation Scheme for museums and galleries. This sets minimum standards which public museums need to achieve and full Accredited status is required when applying for funding from many organisations including the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). It is also the benchmark for professional and public confidence in a museum. While the scheme is not compulsory, it is extremely important that our Fully Accredited status is maintained for the Museum's standing and its eligibility to attract external funding and partnership projects.

The Accreditation Standard circulated with this note provides a high-level overview of the Accreditation scheme, and is also a succinct introduction to how museums operate.

Museums are 'invited' to re-apply for a review every so-many years in order to retain their Accredited status. The last review of Saffron Walden Museum was in 2015; an expected review in 2020 was postponed due to an Arts Council review of the scheme and complications caused by the Covid pandemic. So the interval between reviews has been much longer than usual.

Saffron Walden Museum received its invitation its Accreditation review in July 2023 and we have to complete our submission by 18 January 2024. The submission is made by officers on-line and involves providing copies of key governance, financial and policy documents supplemented by other evidence and answers to a lengthy questionnaire. Much of the preparatory work, including the review and renewal of Museum policies, was undertaken in 2019 and is still in date.

A new Interim Forward Plan (covering the year ahead for the Museum service), together with the current 2023/24 and next year's 2024/25 budgets, need to be submitted as part of the Accreditation review by 18 January. Officers will be drafting an Interim Forward Plan shortly, with reference to the service review through next year. The draft Interim Forward Plan will be on the agenda for the next MMWG meeting this autumn for consideration and recommendation to Cabinet in December, in order to meet the 18 January submission deadline to ACE.