

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** Thursday, 8 May 2025

Title: Saffron Walden Museum Interim Forward Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Maggie Sutton
Portfolio Holder for Communities and Local Partnerships

Report Author: Richard Auty
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Summary

1. This report presents the Interim Forward Plan 2025-27 for Saffron Walden Museum. The plan has been prepared as part of the requirements of the Arts Council England accreditation scheme and requires formal Cabinet approval.
2. The Plan has already been considered and endorsed by the board of Saffron Walden Museum Society and the Museum Management Working Group.

Recommendations

3. That Cabinet approves the Interim Forward Plan.

Financial Implications

4. None

Background Papers

5. None

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	The Interim Forward Plan has been considered by the Museum Society and the Museum Management Working Group prior to its submission to Cabinet
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None

Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	The Interim Forward Plan sets out key objectives for the museum's staff

Situation

7. Saffron Walden Museum is one of the earliest purpose-built museums in the country. It was built by Lord Braybrooke for the Saffron Walden Natural History Society, of which Saffron Walden Museum Society is the successor organisation. The museum opened in 1835, and thus celebrates its 190th birthday this year.
8. The building and its collections are owned by the Society and Uttlesford District Council runs the service under a Museum Management Agreement and associated leases between the Society and the Council. The Council meets day-to-day running costs, the Society funds acquisitions for the collections and collections-related projects.
9. The collections are generally recognised as outstanding for a district museum, due to their breadth and quality. The focus is on the history and natural environment of north-west Essex, but there are important historic collections, especially world cultures and some worldwide natural history. There are an estimated 175,000 objects and specimens in the collection.
10. The museum, like many others, is accredited by Arts Council England. Periodically all museums and galleries in the scheme must reapply. In September 2024, the museum was awarded full accreditation following a lengthy application process. This was an excellent result given the uncertainty at the time of application with regard to the future direction of the museum service.
11. The Museum Accreditation scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. It tells everyone involved with a museum that they're doing the right things to help people to engage with collections and protect them for the future. The Museum Accreditation scheme does this by making sure museums are governed appropriately.
12. The scheme exists to encourage all museums and galleries to meet an agreed standard in:
 - How they are run
 - How they manage their collections
 - How they engage with their users

13. It builds people's confidence in how museums manage collections in trust for society, how they manage public resources and reinforces a shared, ethical way of doing things for everyone involved in running a museum.
14. Accreditation covers all types and sizes of museums and galleries and there are currently more than 1,700 museums participating in the scheme across the UK.
15. One of the requirements of accreditation is for the Museum to have a Forward Plan. These plans usually cover a multi-year period, but due to the changing local government landscape it is thought better to produce one-year plans over the next few years. The Forward Plan sets out the museum's core aims and objectives and must have formal approval - in the case of Saffron Walden Museum, that is approval by Cabinet.
16. The Interim Forward Plan appended to this report reflects the current position with regard to the museum; acknowledging the difficult financial position Uttlesford District Council faces over the next few years and the likelihood of local government reorganisation.
17. The Interim Forward Plan sets out the service's aims and values along with an action plan detailing the actions the museum team will carry out in order to meet those aims.
18. The Forward Plan has been endorsed by the Directors of Saffron Walden Museum Society and is recommended for approval by the Museum management Working Group.

Risk Analysis

19.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Museum Service does not achieve the actions set out in the Forward Pan	2	3	The action plan is ambitious but achievable and the museum team will be focused on its delivery

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.