Minutes of the meeting of the **Windmill Sub-Committee** held on **31 January 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr Mrs M J Webster (Chairman)

Cllr A J Humphries Cllr J M Pullen

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs J R Lumley and from Mr K Turner, National Trust.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr C J Lumley

OFFICERS PRESENT

D Timson - Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
B Broadbent - Principal Officer (Architecture)
C Coates - Arts Development Officer
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

N Grant, Historical Society of Rayleigh
M Hawkins, Historical Society of Rayleigh
M Stone, National Trust
M Symes, Historical Society of Rayleigh
Cllr P Weaver, Rayleigh Town Council

29 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest in item 6 of the agenda by virtue of being Vice-Chairman of the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Committee and a Member of Essex County Council.

Cllrs C J Lumley and J M Pullen each declared a personal interest in item 6 of the agenda by virtue of being members of the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Committee and of being Members of Rayleigh Town Council.

Cllr A J Humphries and Cllr P Weaver each declared a personal interest in

item 6 of the agenda by virtue of being Members of Rayleigh Town Council.

31 RAYLEIGH WINDMILL – LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advising Members on the proposals for the use of each floor of the windmill, public consultation and a launch strategy.

It was noted that progress on the scheme had had to be accelerated, as a result of the condition imposed with respect to the Thames Gateway grant, that all monies be spent within the current financial year. Work had accordingly begun on the inside of the windmill in December. A survey had been conducted by a structural engineer, which had confirmed that the building was structurally sound. The walls of the windmill were 3ft thick, apart from on the ground floor where the depth was 4ft. The windmill was listed officially as the tallest in the county.

Work on the beams, posts and floors, etc were in progress. There was rot in some of the windmill's sails and these would be removed from the building on the following day in order that a closer inspection of their condition might take place and to facilitate works to the external brickworks of the windmill. The County Council millwright would be overseeing this process.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to how long a period the sails would remain down, officers advised that the sails were likely to be put back in early summer at the earliest.

Developing Future Use

During discussion of possible future uses of the windmill as a community facility there was a general consensus that the ground floor should be utilised as predominantly classroom/exhibition space. The classroom space should be as flexible as possible in order to cater for a variety of needs, including building on the National Trust's Guardianship Scheme. Most of the exhibits on this floor should be kept as close as possible to the walls to facilitate this and there should be the capacity for travelling exhibitions. There should be a small display area to give a flavour of what would be on the higher floors and a second display area to house leaflets about other attractions in the District and postcards relating to the windmill and the Mount as well as being a centre for information about other attractions.

The ground floor should also house a screen, which would relay images from cameras sited on each of the floors and on the external cap at the top of the windmill so that all visitors would be able to see everything displayed within the higher floors of the windmill and also the panoramic view outside the windmill.

Responding to an enquiry relating to classroom seating, officers advised that space was obviously very tight and it would be necessary to explore several

options for this, including, for example, floor cushions, as any seating would either need to be stored under display cabinets or at the Mill.

The first floor should be utilised for museum display, with some class space and exhibition space. It was generally perceived that, as the first floor comprised the largest area within the windmill, with vertical walls that would lend themselves well for display purposes, it was the ideal area to house permanent exhibitions for the Rayleigh Historical Society. It would be necessary to work closely with the Historical Society and the Museums Service in developing a collections policy so that duplicated items, for example, would not be accepted in future and so that details of who had donated items could be recorded. This policy would also determine what the content of the exhibits would contain

In response to an enquiry about whether items would be accessible to visitors, officers confirmed that fragile items that needed to be protected would be displayed in glass cabinets, but the intention was that there should also be hands-on displays of more robust items. It was also noted that, with respect to displays of local historical documents, high quality facsimiles of originals could be displayed.

The second floor should be used for a variety of exhibitions, which would be rotated. This could include themed exhibitions from the Historical Society's collections and, potentially, craft exhibitions. There would also be meeting space.

The third floor would become a viewing level, as it would be the highest part of the windmill open to the public. The three large windows on this level would be replaced by original-sized windows, which were larger than the current ones, and which would be clear glazed rather than obscure glazed, as was currently the case. This floor would contain a Rochford scale model and a history timeline around the wall. There would also be merit in a small display of the history of the Mount being sited next to the window where the Mount could best be viewed. It was hoped that this would help to encourage visitors to go and visit other attractions within the area.

The fourth and fifth floors would be for maintenance purposes only. It was also noted that, by means of glass screening, it would be possible to lock off individual floors without, however, preventing access to floors above or below.

IT opportunities were being fully explored, both with respect to projecting images from all the open floors and a panoramic external view from a camera sited on the hub of the windmill to a screen on the ground floor. In addition, the possibility of creating an electronic archive of materials, particularly of local documents held by the Rayleigh Historical Society, some of which dated back to the 1600s, was being explored. Such an archive would enable documents, never previously seen by local residents, to be accessible to all. Options for linking such an archive to the Council's website and to the Essex Museums archive would also be investigated.

Targeted meetings would be held with various groups within the community to identify any aspirations for services/uses that could be provided by the windmill for the community. It was noted that one such meeting should take place with members of the Rayleigh Historical Society.

It was noted that the National Trust was in the process of developing a conservation plan for Rayleigh Mount, which would include the re-building of the Barbican entrance. The National Trust would consider adding an entry to that of the Mount in the National Trust Year Book about the windmill, which could include details relating to the provision of refreshments for the general public, signposting a history trail in Rayleigh and other local attractions and the possibility of guided tours of the windmill on named days.

It was possible that the East of England Regional National Trust and the Southend branch of the National Trust could generate finance to help with displays at the windmill and there could also be the possibility of housing a National Trust shop within the windmill.

In response to a concern raised about car parking, it was noted that there might be merit in contacting local schools to explore the possibility of school car parks being used by future visitors to the windmill and Mount.

Opening Strategy

During debate, it was noted that the archiving of materials held by the Rayleigh Historical Society and the setting up of displays would take some considerable time. A phased opening, commencing with the opening of the sensory garden to the public in November/December 2005, culminating in the opening of the interior of the windmill in April 2006, would therefore seem a sensible way forward.

Future Management of the Windmill

There was a general consensus that more detailed discussions about management of the windmill should be delayed until such time as it was possible to determine the opening times of the windmill. It was recognised that management of the windmill was crucial to the project.

Ongoing Publicity

Progress on works, with photographs, would be made available on the Council's website. The notice board at the Mill, which currently advertised the Mount, could also be used to signpost visitors to the windmill.

Recommended to Council:-

(1) That the proposals for the floor usage, as outlined in section 3 of the report, be agreed.

(2) That the broad strategy around the opening of the various elements of the project, as outlined in section 4 of the report, be agreed.

(3) That the principle of a partnership arrangement with the National Trust be pursued to the overall benefit of the project, with details reported back to the Windmill Sub-Committee. (CD(F&ES))

32 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Sub-Committee was scheduled for Monday, 7 March 2005 at 3.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am.

Chairman .....

Date .....