

**MEMBERS INFORMATION NOTE**

**Hitchin Town Hall: Museum and Community Facilities Proposal**

Please see the Arts, Museums and Heritage Forum Newsletter which provides members of the Forum with an update on the development of business plans for a new museum and community venue in Hitchin Town Hall. **Please note the most recent update from English Heritage which now advises that the decision on listing should be made by the end of September.** As anticipated in the last MIS update on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010, this means that it will not be possible to report back to Council on the proposal in September as originally planned and a report on the implications on this will be presented to Cabinet 28<sup>th</sup> September.

John Robinson  
**Strategic Director Customer Services**

**13<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

**Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum Newsletter**

**August 2010**

This newsletter is intended to provide members of the Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum with a report on the progress made since the last meeting of this group, held at the Sun Hotel on 28 April 2010.

Both NHDC and the Hitchin Initiative have completed their separate business plans for a new museum and community venue in Hitchin Town Hall. Council officers have held regular meetings with Hitchin Initiative and their advisor John Creswell, to ensure that the two business plans use a common format. This will enable Councillors more easily to compare and contrast both schemes.

A specialist organisation, Strategic Leisure, has been appointed to give a detailed financial appraisal of the two schemes, and they are currently finalising their draft report. This company is experienced in determining the potential costs and income to be made from community halls and similar venues around the country, so their assessment to ensure that the figures in both plans are realistic is extremely important.

We have spoken again with English Heritage about the possible listing of Hitchin Town Hall. The Council was last told that it was the intention of English Heritage to make a recommendation by June, which would be forwarded to the Secretary of State for a decision in July, but these dates have passed, and we are now told that a decision should be forwarded by the end of September. Depending on the scope of

any listing decision, there may well be impacts on either or both proposals, to a greater or lesser degree.

Once we have a listing decision, we plan to hold another public meeting on the proposals, to allow discussion of the intended usage of the hall as set out in both business plans. I will ensure that there is as much advance warning before this meeting as possible, to enable all who would like to attend to do so. The original proposal was to report back to Council in September with the results of the listing, the business plan analysis, and community consultation. However without information on listing, this timescale is no longer possible. It is hoped that the delay will not be too long.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

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