

MEMBERS INFORMATION NOTE

Hitchin Town Hall: Museum & Community Facilities Proposals

This information note outlines the current position in respect of Hitchin Town Hall and work being undertaken to assist Hitchin Initiative and local Community Groups develop a proposal for consideration by Council as requested at the meeting on 11th February 2010. The note updates information provided in an MIS Briefing on 15th April 2010 and provides brief details of further work undertaken, scheduled tasks and an assessment of the likely reporting date back to Council.

Hitchin Initiative Proposal

Following the meeting of Council on 11th February 2010 officers have been working with Hitchin Initiative and their appointed advisor together with the Council's architectural consultant from Buttress, Fuller, Allsop & Williams and specialist consultants Strategic Leisure. This work is primarily concerned with developing the outline proposal submitted by Hitchin Initiative into a more detailed and costed plan, a pre requisite to the development of a full business plan for the Hitchin Initiative proposal.

Existing NHDC Conversion Proposal

In order to address requests for a consolidated 'business plan' officers continue to develop a single plan for the common elements of each proposal with additional sections highlighting those areas of design or operation which are different, for example, income assumptions that could safely be made if either the Mountford Hall or Gymnasium were to be retained.

The production of these business plans in a common format should assist Members in drawing a direct comparison between the merits or otherwise of the two schemes.

Application for Listing

A further update has been received from the English Heritage that it was their intention to finalise their assessment for the Town Hall within the next few days. This will then be forwarded for decision to the Secretary of State so the earliest time for decision will be mid July. The decision, and any implications arising from it may well have a significant impact on both proposals and this may necessitate reconsideration of fundamental or minor part of either proposal. This may have an adverse effect on officers ability to report to Council as outlined in the summary project plan below. An update will be provided on this as soon as a decision has been made.

Consultation Arrangements

It has been agreed with Hitchin Initiative that two joint consultation exercises will be carried on both proposals. This allows views to be gathered on both proposals and will, again, allow for a more meaningful direct comparison of reaction to each scheme.

The first of these meetings, outlining the concept of both schemes was a well attended event at the Sun Hotel on 28th April which approximately 80 members of the public attended and notes are available on NHDC's website http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture/art_museums_and_heritage/art_museums_and_heritage_forum/art_museums_and_heritage_forum_documents.htm

A further consultation meeting on final proposals including the respective business plans is scheduled for June but this will need to be re-scheduled once the decision on listing is known.

Project Plan

The Chairman of Scrutiny has indicated that he feels it likely Scrutiny Committee will wish to examine the matter before consideration by Council to ensure the adequacy of information being presented is sufficient for Members to take an informed decision.

In consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, representatives from Hitchin Initiative and the Community organisations involved, together with the Council's architectural advisor, a detailed project plan has been developed. Whilst Council's original aspiration was for the matter to be reported back to it by June 2010 the complexity and scale of tasks Hitchin Initiative need to address to produce the necessary level of detail means that the estimated timescale would envisage the report being ready for consideration by Council in September 2010 although this will depend on the timing and detailed content of any decision on listing.

	Start	Org End Date	New End Date	Progress
Council Decision	Dec-09	Feb 10		Complete
Cost Allocation				
Develop Model		Apr 10		Complete
Agree Arrangements		May 10		Complete
Listed Building				
Decision	Apr-10	Apr-10	June/July	In Progress
Consider Implications	May-10	May 10	July/Aug	In Progress
Liaison Meetings		Apr 10		Complete
		May 10		Complete
		Jun 10		
Community Proposal				
Agree Business Plan Format	Feb-10	Mar 10		Complete
Develop Business Plan	Mar-10	Jun 10		In progress
Agree Plans	Mar-10	Jun 10		In progress
- Draft Plan		May 10		Complete
- Final Plan (2)		Jun 10		In progress
Appoint BFWA	Feb-10	Mar 10		Complete

Appt Specialist Cater./Inc Consultants	Feb-10	Mar 10	Apr 10	Complete
Submit Comm Builders Fund App (1)		May 10	June 10	In Progress
NHDC Proposal				
Agree Business Plan Format		Mar 10		Complete
Develop Business Plan	Mar-10	Jun 10		In progress
Agree Final Plan (2)		Jun 10		In progress
Appt Specialist Cater./Inc Consultants	Feb 10	Mar 10	Apr 10	Complete
Public Consultation				
- Concept 28th April 2010	Apr-10	Apr-10		Complete
- Business Plan TBA (2)	Jun-10	Jun 10		
Analysis				
Technical Appraisal Museum (2)	Jul 10	Aug 10		
Technical Appraisal Community (2)	Jul 10	Aug 10		
Prepare Report for Council (2)	Aug 10	Sept 10		
Town Hall Trust Administrators				
Briefing on Proposals	May-10	May 10		Complete
Confirm Charity Commission Registration	Mar-10	Jun 10		In Progress
Agree Accounts & Management Arrangements	Mar-10	Jun 10		In Progress
Consider Formal Proposal Following Council decision (2)	Sept-10	Sept 10		
Stage 2 Plan				
Develop Project Mandate (2)		Sept 10		
Agree Mandate & Project Parameters (2)		Sept 10		

(1) Letter of intent submitted, anticipated full application will be submitted by end June with provisos in respect of listing decision if unknown.

(2) All dates subject to outcome of listing application

Further Information

If you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact Ros Allwood, Project Manager on 01462 435197 ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk or myself.

John Robinson
Strategic Director Customer Services

14th June 2010