

**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 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The note provides brief details of work undertaken to date, scheduled tasks and an assessment of the likely reporting date back to Council.

**Hitchin Initiative Proposal**

Following the meeting of Council on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 officers have been continuing to work with Hitchin Initiative and their appointed advisor together with the Council's architectural consultant from Buttress, Fuller, Allsop & Williams. This work is primarily concerned with developing the outline proposal submitted by Hitchin Initiative in to 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 are developing 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 is their intention to finalise their assessment for the Town Hall by the end of May. This will then be forwarded for decision to the Secretary of State so the earliest time for decision would be at the end of June/early July. Officers have advised that they understand the importance of timing for this decision and so it is being processed as quickly as possible. However, because of the nature of the work, they have no control over the number of listing requests that are submitted. Priority will be given to considering buildings that are at physical risk and therefore, as a result there is no fixed time scale for English Heritage to deal with requests for listing. 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.

**Outline Project Plan**

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 but this is subject to the timing of the listed building decision.

The Chairman of Scrutiny has indicated that he feels it likely the Overview & 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.

	Start	Org End Date	New End Date	Progress
<b>Council Decision</b>	<b>Dec-09</b>	<b>Feb 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
<b>Cost Allocation</b>				
Develop Model		<b>Apr 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
Agree Arrangements		<b>May 10</b>		
<b>Listed Building</b>				
Decision	<b>Apr-10</b>	<b>Apr-10</b>	<b>June/July</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
Consider Implications	<b>May-10</b>	<b>May 10</b>	<b>June/July</b>	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>Liasion Meetings</b>		<b>Apr 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
		<b>May 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
		<b>Jun 10</b>		
<b>Community Proposal</b>				
Agree Business Plan Format	<b>Feb-10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
Develop Business Plan	<b>Mar-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
Agree Plans	<b>Mar-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
- Draft Plan		<b>May 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
- Final Plan		<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
Appoint BFWA	<b>Feb-10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
Appt Specialist Cater./Inc Consultants	<b>Feb-10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>	<b>Apr 10</b>	<b>Complete</b>
Submit Comm Builders Fund App		<b>May 10</b>		
<b>NHDC Proposal</b>				
Agree Business Plan Format		<b>Mar 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
Develop Business Plan	<b>Mar-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
Agree Final Plan		<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In progress</b>
Appt Specialist Cater./Inc Consultants	<b>Feb 10</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>	<b>Apr 10</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Public Consultation</b>				
- Concept 28th April 2010	<b>Apr-10</b>	<b>Apr-10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
- Business Plan TBA	<b>Jun-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		
<b>Analysis</b>				
Technical Appraisal Museum	<b>Jul 10</b>	<b>Aug 10</b>		
Technical Appraisal Community	<b>Jul 10</b>	<b>Aug 10</b>		
Prepare Report for Council	<b>Aug 10</b>	<b>Sept 10</b>		

<b>Town Hall Trust Administrators</b>				
Briefing on Proposals	<b>May-10</b>	<b>May 10</b>		<b>Complete</b>
Confirm Charity Commission Registration	<b>Mar-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In Progress</b>
Agree Accounts & Lease Arrangements	<b>Mar-10</b>	<b>Jun 10</b>		<b>In Progress</b>
Consider Formal Proposal Following Council decision	<b>Sep-10</b>	<b>Sept 10</b>		
<b>Stage 2 Plan</b>				
Develop Project Mandate		<b>Sept 10</b>		
Agree Mandate & Project Parameters		<b>Sept 10</b>		

### Consultation Arrangements

It has been agreed with Hitchin Initiative that a joint consultation exercise will be carried on both proposals simultaneously. This will allow the views to be gathered on both proposals and will, again, allow for a more meaningful direct comparison of reaction to each scheme. Arrangements have been made for an open public meeting of the Arts, Museums & Heritage Forum at 7.00 pm for 7.30 pm on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April in the Ballroom of the Sun Hotel Hitchin. Members are of course most welcome to attend.

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](mailto:ros.allwood@north-herts.gov.uk) or myself.

John Robinson  
**Projects Executive – Museums Project Board**  
**Strategic Director Customer Services**

**27<sup>th</sup> May 2010**