



Hitchin Town Hall/North Hertfordshire Museum Project Board

Minutes of Project Board Meeting held at North Herts District Council Offices

19th May 2011

Present: Councillor Tricia Cowley, Morag Norgan (HTCI), Brent Smith (HTCI), John Robinson Strategic Director Customer (Project Executive), Lynn Saville Head of Community & Cultural Services (Deputy Project Executive), Tim Neil, Accountancy Manager, Katie White, Legal Services Corporate Manager, Ros Allwood (Project Advisor), Vaughan Watson (Technical Advisor NHDC)

Apologies: David Leal Bennett (Technical Advisor, HTCI), Marie Searle, Property Solicitor

Circulation: Those present, David Leal Bennett, Marie Searle, NHDC Officer Group

1. Introductions

Tim Neil was introduced as the Accountancy Manager and Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure & Environmental Services who was present in an observer capacity and would be assuming responsibility for elements of Lynn Saville's role in this project in the coming months.

JR advised that it should be noted that the project was not fully configured as yet and that pre-cursors to this currently being worked on were:

- Hitchin Town Hall Ltd operational start up plan
- Agreement on terms with the Future Builders and the Development Agreement
- Procurement of architects, particularly OJEU notice implications
- VAT implications arising from the above

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Outstanding Actions:

- **Project Plan Exceptions**

There are currently no exceptions to the project plan. However, it was noted that as this was a short term plan, this needed to be developed further.

Action: LS/RA

In addition, LS advised that feedback from the hall users had been positive and that where permission to pass on their details to Hitchin Initiative was given this was done immediately. LS raised an issue about advising hall hirers that there the closure of the hall would be delayed by 5 months due to the OJEU notice be advertised and it was agreed this be discussed in greater detail when discussing the highlight report.

- **Project Initiation Document (PiD)**

It was proposed not to consider this in detail as amendments were needed in relation to Board membership and key dates once the project was fully configured.

Action: RA/JR

- **Risk Management Log**

The risk management document has been reviewed and it currently monitored by the Officer Team. A full version will be issued with the next highlight report.

Action: RA

The minutes of the meeting were otherwise agreed.

2. **Highlight Report No 1**

JR introduced the first highlight report for the project and was noted that in relation to the schedule status, this was being developed further to incorporate the Museums, Halls and Hitchin Town Hall Ltd's implementation plans.

All tasks required were completed and the tasks outstanding was the appointment of supervising architects. JR provided an update in that the original project plan envisaged NHDC being able to shortcut procurement to engage Buttress Fuller Williams Allsop without using the OJEU procurement route. A number of alternative have been vigorously investigated but non proved to be suitable and it is now estimated that a period of 160+ days will be required to develop and put in place a full OJEU procurement for the appointment of a Supervising Architect.

LS advised that having looked at this in detail it was helpful in that Bedford Council went through a similar process and that this model could be used. It was anticipated that in liaison with the Procurement Officer, work on advertising this would be completed by the end of May and that by going through process, the council would not be at risk of challenge. MN advised that this delay in the project would have to be reported to Future Builders and it was agreed that a statement prepared by NHDC would be prepared and forwarded to Hitchin Initiative.

Action: LS/KW

In terms of the Development Agreement, KW advised that NHDC have recently received a letter from David Morgan. It was noted that there were still some areas where a response was required following queries from NHDC. MN agreed to pick this up directly with David Morgan and requested that a meeting be organised with all parties to resolve the outstanding issues on the agreement. It was agreed that arrangements would be made to schedule a meeting w/c 6th June 2011.

Action: SN to arrange meeting.

MN provided an update on Hitchin Town Hall Ltd's structure following a Steering Group Meeting held on 18th May. At the meeting it was agreed that:

- The company would seek charitable status
- Would have 7 Trustees, 3 of which would be members of the community and would serve a term of 2 years

- The company would be Ltd by Guarantee and so would enable members of the Hitchin and neighbouring communities by becoming a member and this gaining the right to vote.
- That ordinary shares would be priced at £1.00 to allow the widest possible involvement.

It was agreed that once this had been put to the various community groups in Hitchin, Hitchin Town Hall Ltd would put this in writing to NHDC.

Action: MN

TN reported that following a recent telephone discussion with HMRC there were two routes to take in to VAT as:

- To obtain a ruling from HMRC for zero rating – however, TN advised that this was highly unlikely and, that:
- The likely option was to gain a special ruling for exceeding the partial exemption limit as a one-off.

A letter is in the process of being drafted to formally submit to HMRC and it is envisaged that once submitted, a decision will be made within 2-3 weeks.

Action: Note

In terms of notifying hall users that the closure of Hitchin Town Hall will not be delayed by 5 months, it was noted that this Council needed to be notified in the first instance. It was agreed that JR would consider the best way forward in reporting this to Members and in the meantime, requested that LS develop a briefing note for hall users which could be despatched after the appropriate course of action had been identified.

Action: JR/LS

4. Date of Future Meeting

It was agreed not to set a date for a future Board meeting and that a meeting would be made once the actions above had been resolved/complete.

John Robinson
Strategic Director Customer Services

19th May 2011