

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted [n/a]

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Legal and Community

1. DECISION TAKEN

The appointment of Mr John Richardson, the Independent Chairman for the review into Hitchin Town Hall/District Wide Museum Project.

2. DECISION TAKER

Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager,
(as per the Overview and Scrutiny decision 21 January 2019, having consulted the Chairman, Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Group Leaders and with the endorsement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 March).

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

3 April 2019

4. REASON FOR DECISION

4.1 To enable the review into the Hitchin Town Hall/District Wide Museum Project, to accord with the wishes that the Chairman for the Panel be an independent person.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 General principles of the appointment of an independent Chairman for the Panel were discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 6 November 2018, however, no consensus was reached at that stage. The individuals approached and the process is detailed in Paragraph 7.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

6.1 Consultation has been with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Group Leaders with reports being presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 A report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2019 by the Acting Scrutiny Officer. The Committee resolved:

(1) That the Committee receive and comment on the approach into the review of the Hitchin Town Hall / District Wide Museum Project

(2) That the Committee agree the proposed approach and associated timeline for the conducting of the review.

(3) *That the Committee delegates the finalising of any outstanding actions to the Lead Support Officer (the Democratic Services Manager), in consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Group Leaders.*

7.2 Telephone interviews were conducted by Cllr Needham, Cllr Stears-Handscomb, Cllr Clark, Cllr Dennis-Harburg (Vice-Chairman for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in lieu of the Chairman) with the potential appointees. The Democratic Services Manager and Acting Scrutiny Officer were also in attendance. Following which John Richardson was invited to meet with the Cllrs Dennis-Harburg (Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Needham, Stears-Handscomb and Clark and the Acting Scrutiny Officer. It was agreed that -

7.3 Mr John Richardson was an appropriate person to Chair the Panel, given his significant experience of chairing a variety of meetings of which a number were research related, and should be appointed as the Independent Chairman. He was subsequently offered that position.

7.4 This appointment information was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 March 2019 and this was endorsed by the Committee. In line with the original delegation of 21 January 2019, such appointment is now confirmed.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Panel is an informal time-limited body with an independent Chairman appointed (effectively co-opted), which will be akin to a task and finish group. The appointment has been made in accordance with the delegation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 21 January 2019 and has been endorsed in principle on 19 March 2019.

8.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference provide at 6.2.7 (u) *"To appoint time limited task and finish Topic Groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet."* The Committee can also (i) *"Question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)";* The Committee did so on 21 January 2019.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A one-off honorarium payment of £1350, plus travel expenses, paid at the conclusion of the process.

10. RISK IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The review is intended to provide lessons learned which will assist the Council to minimise risks in the future.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

11.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open which ensures that the delivery of public services benefits all aspects of the community where practical.

12. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this decision.

13. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The scrutiny review will impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling and resources. There is also the potential for additional resource requirements in relation to report writing, information collection and analysis and committee attendance. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council’s agreed Corporate Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 January 2019:

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=2036&Ver=4>

14.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 19 March 2019:

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=2037&Ver=4>

15. NOTIFICATION DATE

5 April 2019

Signature of Decision Taker



This decision is a NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS and is not subject to call in.