

INFORMATION NOTE: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY FACILITY**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES**

This information note provides an update on the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility project following Council's decision on 11th November 2010 to proceed with the Hitchin Initiative's sponsored 'community' proposal for Hitchin Town Hall now being taken forward by Hitchin Town Hall Ltd.

Project Issues

Since confirmation of the grant/loan award from the Community Builders Fund (now known as 'Future Builders England Ltd') on 10th February 2011 significant progress has been made and regular updates have been provided via Members Information Service. Current issues include:

- Development Agreement: Clarification of the grant/loan conditions with Future Builders is required to ensure these are incorporated in to the overall Development Agreement. Key points and potential solutions have been identified with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd and the Project Team continues to provide assistance to encourage progress in this area.
- Verbal confirmation has been received from Hitchin Town Hall Ltd in respect of its company and governance structure. In general terms these are in accord with the Council's expectations and this will be confirmed once written proposals are received.
- As reported at your last meeting procurement of the 'Supervising Architect' required the work be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union. This advert has now been placed and a timetable highlighting key phases appears below:

Tasks	End dates
Publish Notice Inviting Expressions of Interest	20th Jun 11
Closing Date for Receipt of Expressions of Interest	19th Jul 11
Closing Date for Receipt of Completed Pre Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs)	26th Jul 11
Evaluate PQQs	TBC
Issue Invitation To Tender	16th Aug 11
Closing Date for Receipt of clarification questions from suppliers	19th Sept 11
Tenderers' Site Visit	TBC
Closing Date for Receipt of Tenders	26th Sept 11
Evaluate Tender Bids	TBC
Tenderers' Presentations/Interviews	TBC
Notification of Intention to Award (Standstill Period)	18 th Oct 11
Contract Award (10 days from date of Notification)	28 th Oct 11
Contract Start Date	

- The grant/loan conditions and Development Agreement create a complex VAT environment for the Council to actively manage to minimise VAT liability for both itself and Hitchin Town Hall Ltd. Specialist advice has been received and is being used to provide feedback on the Development Agreement as further details are understood and amendments made. In the meantime, we are in active dialogue with HMRC to minimise the Council's liability.
- Hitchin Town Hall and Museum users together with other stakeholders have been notified about the anticipated delay in closure of facilities at a meeting of the Arts. Museum & Heritage Forum on 8th June 2011.

Next Steps

- Procurement of the 'Supervising Architect' will continue as set out above.
- Following receipt of confirmation of conditions from Future Builders, officers will progress to conclude the Development Agreement with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd.
- Reports to the Council and Trust to consider a final agreement will be prepared to specifically seek authority to transfer part of the Town Hall and Trust property by way of a lease.

John Robinson
Strategic Director Customer Services

4th July 2011