

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
7 MARCH 2017**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

9

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUM AND COMMUNITY FACILITY AT HITCHIN TOWN HALL

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CONTRACTS AND PROJECTS MANAGER

This note provides a further update for Members on the North Hertfordshire Museum and Town Hall Project following the last update.

PROJECT UPDATE

Museum Fit-Out

Work has been progressing well on site, and the displays on the ground floor (*Discovering North Herts.*) and the main first floor gallery (*Living in North Herts.*) are nearing completion with an estimate date of the end of March 2017. There has been a slight slippage in these areas due to a few items that were not originally identified. Officers are very satisfied with the quality of the showcases, labels and mounts and are confident that the public will be impressed too.

Work on the Terrace Gallery displays will take place once the main galleries are completed, however, as this gallery is partially on the land previously known as 14 & 15 Brand Street the Council is still to decide how this area will be completed.

The Museum Service posts updates on the project on its North Hertfordshire Museum Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/northhertsmuseum/>; the last update received over 1000 viewings in two days.

Although the museum is not yet open, the Museum Service's first exhibition *Pirates, Pants & Wellyphants*, was held in the Lucas Room of Hitchin Town Hall in December and the first few weeks of January; Tuesday to Saturday. The exhibition was a great success, with 2400 visitors and the museum staff were very pleased with this level of interest. The Lucas Room will also be used for the next temporary exhibition, on loan from the Southbank Centre, *Matisse, Drawing with Scissors*. The exhibition will take place from 1st April – 6th May 2017 and features lithographic prints of the artist's famous cut-outs, produced in the last four years of his life.

Officers will be arranging a Members tour of the Museum, this will take place when the two main galleries (*Discovering North Herts.* and *Living in North Herts.*) are complete and will be a great opportunity for Members to see the quality of work that has been undertaken and to ask questions.

TOWN HALL UPDATE

Since its opening to the public in June 2016, the Town Hall has seen a steady growth in its programme of events. Recent events, regular hires and one-off hires of the Town Hall include;

Wedding Parties

Since reopening, the Town Hall has played host to several Wedding parties, with caterers utilising the fully refitted kitchen to serve 3 course sit-down meals for up to 150 guests and bookings for next year's wedding season are already being taken.

Live Boxing

In partnership with a local boxing gym, Hitchin Town Hall has ran a large-scale boxing event showcasing local talent and attracting hundreds through its doors for a fantastic evening of quality boxing. The Town Hall has another boxing event scheduled for 25 March.

Live Music

In November, Hitchin Town Hall played host to a remembrance concert organised by Hitchin Chamber Orchestra. In December, Hitchin Town Hall hosted Alex Bay's band Roadrunner for a homecoming gig. Both events were attended by hundreds of people, with lots of positive feedback and a real opportunity to see how versatile the venue is for the performance of live music

Christmas Parties

In December 2016, Hitchin Town Hall played host to 3 Christmas Party evenings, organised by NHDC and marketed to local businesses and community organisations. Several large scale private bookings were taken in the run up to Christmas. The events were a great success with all that attended and plans are already underway to increase the number of Christmas Party nights in 2017.

Burns Night

The first large event in 2017 saw a Burns Night celebration evening at Hitchin Town Hall. The event was organised by Hitchin Initiative and featured a 5 course menu cooked using the Town Hall's in-house catering facilities, a piper in full regalia piping in the haggis, as well as many speeches and recitals by Robert Burns.

Low Intensity Fitness Classes

Yoga class is held every Monday morning from 9:30am and is suitable for all ages and abilities. .In addition, Tai Chi sessions are held every Thursday lunchtime, from 12:30 – 13:30.

High Intensity Fitness Classes

Zumba, Body Combat and Insanity all form part of Hitchin Town Hall's new fitness programme, with 5 sessions taking place between Monday and Thursday. Details of all fitness classes can be found on the Town Hall website and Facebook page.

Hitchin Fencing Club

Hitchin Fencing Club runs every Monday from 7pm- 9pm. The club was founded in 2000 and is now a thriving fencing club that calls Hitchin Town Hall its home. The club runs for both juniors and adults of all abilities, for further information, please visit <http://www.hitchinfencing.com>

Dancing at Hitchin Town Hall

Hitchin Town Hall runs regular Tea Dances on the 2nd Sunday of each month. These dances have proved extremely popular, with attendees commenting on how enjoyable the sprung floor is to dance on and how beautifully restored the building is. In addition to this, Hitchin Town Hall is once again home to Rodney's Dance School, previous hirers of the venue before its refurbishment. Rodney's classes run every Wednesday from 6pm – 10pm.

Forthcoming Events

The Town Hall's programme has already begun to fill up, with a wide variety of events taking place throughout 2017. This includes live music, community events, live boxing, open days, conferences, Hitchin Festival events and much more.

For further information, please contact hitchintownhall@north-herts.gov.uk or via telephone on 01462474554. For information on hiring of the hall, upcoming events and any other information please visit the webpage <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/hitchin-town-hall> or like us on Facebook; www.facebook.com/hitchintownhall

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Council's website provides information on the background and progress on this project at http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture/museums.htm

A dedicated Museum Service Blog is available at <http://www.northhertsmuseum.org/>

Updates on the significant events in the project are provided on the Council's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/northhertsmuseums> Twitter feed <https://twitter.com/NorthHertsDC> and Flickr pages <http://www.flickr.com/photos/northhertfordshire/sets/>

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