

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 JANUARY 2019**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF HITCHIN TOWN HALL / DISTRICT WIDE MUSUEM PROJECT

REPORT OF THE ACTING SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report submits the proposed approach for the review into Hitchin Town Hall / District Wide Museum Project (HTH / DWM Project).
- 1.2 The report follows on from the 'HTH District Wide Museum Meeting Minutes 6 Nov 18' document.
- 1.3 Within this report the following is covered: the review terms of reference and outline scope; the review panel formation; the timeline for the review; and the appointment of the panel Independent Chair.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee be recommended to:

- 2.1 Receive and comment on the approach into the review of HTH / DWM Project.
- 2.2 Agree the proposed approach and associated timeline for conducting the review.
- 2.3 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.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The recommendation(s) contained within paragraph 2.1 - 2.3 are the best course of action for the review into the project.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None applicable.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 Discussions took place with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Group Leaders on 6 November 2018 (as per 7.1 and background paper at 17.1) and this was presented to Committee on 11 December 2018.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 A meeting was held on 6 November 2018 to discuss the outline approach for a review into the Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project. The Chair, Vice Chair and Group Leaders were in attendance at the meeting and agreed in principle the scope of the review as: '*Hitchin Town Hall Project Review: How the Council worked with community partners*'. A copy of the meeting minutes is referred to in the background papers. This report provides further details on the review process, which are being submitted for the Committee's approval.

7.2 The report seeks approval on the proposed approach in the following areas:

- Review Terms of Reference;
- Review Panel Formation;
- Appointment of Independent Chair; and
- Review Timeline.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

8.1 The review will be carried out in a Panel format (based on an Overview and Scrutiny task and finish group); the terms of reference for the review are contained in Appendix A.

- 8.2 The agreed overarching aim is to review and better understand how the Council worked with community partners during the HTH / DWM Project. The sub areas of investigation proposed for this are:
- To evaluate the issues that arose with partners during the project;
 - To evaluate the effectiveness of the contractual arrangements between partners and the Council;
 - To understand the risk management and risk sharing between the Council and partners;
 - To understand the performance issues that arose between the Council and its partners during the project; and
 - To make recommendations to improve future partner working relationships.
- 8.3 The above investigation areas will be incorporated into a detailed scoping document that will be put together and approved by the panel appointed to the review. It is not intended to bring the detailed scope to the Committee for approval, as this function will be deemed part of the review panel's duties.

REVIEW PANEL FORMATION

- 8.4 Following the meeting on 6 November 2018, a review panel of four Councillors, with an Independent Chair, to make a total of five individuals is proposed.
- 8.5 The Councillor membership of the panel will loosely reflect the political proportionality of the authority (2:1:1). The proposed method of selection of Councillors to the panel is for Group Leaders to nominate. Given the proposed timeline for the review it is suggested that these should be non-retiring Members (to avoid any duplication / new panel Members having to get up to speed with existing panel's work).

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CHAIR

- 8.6 General principles of appointment of an independent Chairman for the Panel were discussed at the meeting on 6 November, however, no consensus was reached at that stage.
- 8.7 In order to progress this, an approach has been made to Peter Chapman, the Independent Person for the NHDC, who has confirm his initial availability. Enquiries have also taken place with Welwyn and Hatfield, an authority we have been undertaking joint democratic working and their suggested person, Donna Modeste, has also confirmed her interest in chairing the Panel.
- 8.8 For proceeding with appointing the Independent Chair, the proposed preference is to finalise appointment arrangements with Peter Chapman. This is due to his existing role as one of the Council's Independent Persons appointed by Full Council. The Lead Officer shall have delegated responsibility to finalise the Independent Chair appointment, with the ability to approach Donna Modeste, should an arrangement with Peter Chapman not be achieved.

REVIEW TIMELINE

- 8.9 The key tasks for the review are detailed in the Review Timeline under Appendix B. The dates for which these tasks are to be completed by are shown, along with the stakeholders involved in ensuring their completion. The dates within the timeline are indicative only, as until the panel is appointed, their availability on the suggested dates cannot be confirmed. Due to this there is a six week contingency built into the current timeline to allow for extension that may be required on tasks.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed panel will be an informal time-limited body with an independent Chair appointed (effectively co-opted), which will be akin to a task and finish group. As such there is no formal legal requirement as to its composition or approach to the task (although around four to six councillors would normally be involved, dependent on the subject at hand). The proposed membership of four and independent Chair falls within the Centre for Public Scrutiny's approach to such issues. At the end of the process the panels report will be submitted to the Committee for consideration and referral where appropriate to Cabinet and other partners.
- 9.2 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)";

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Depending on the Independent Chair selected there may be a need to provide an allowance or honorarium payment. Should a payment be required, then this will be finalised in consultation with the Service Director – Resources.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This review is intended to provide lessons learned which will help the Council to minimise risks in the future. The recommendations in relation to the format of the review are intended to ensure that it remains focused and achieve its objectives within a reasonable timeframe.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 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, and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 12.2 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.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The widening of the reach of scrutiny reviews has the potential to significantly 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.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Review Terms of Reference

- 15.3 Appendix B – Review Timeline

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 HTH / District Wide Museum Meeting Minutes 6 November 2018 presented to Committee on 11 December 2018 (item 17 of report pack Appendix C): [[CLICK HERE FOR PAGE](#)]