

[REDACTED]

From: Brent Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 June 2019 14:43
To: Scrutiny Officer
Subject: Hitchin Town Hall Review

Dear Sirs

I have just returned from holiday and understand that there is a review of the Town Hall project. I would have thought that you would have contacted me bearing in mind my role in the project – I was chairman of Hitchin Initiative; came up with the design which was ultimately built (but not to the exact details of my design – a matter which I have corresponded with you over); was chairman of Hitchin Town Hall Ltd and remain a director of that company; and attended most of the project meetings.

I can confirm that I would be happy to attend your review panel and give evidence to them.

I am firmly of the opinion that the problems with the project stemmed from the actions and attitude of the project director, John Robinson, and a lack of control and direction from the councillors involved.

Briefly, I would see the principal failures of the project as being:

- Late, over budget and not to the quality which could reasonably have been expected.
- Two of our key requirements, improvement of the acoustics and maintenance of the sprung floor, were not done and have already needed further work.
- The capital injection from HTHL, part grant and part loan, was lost to your Authority due to the breach of contract regarding the wall across the stage (there were other matters but this was the principal breakdown).
- You could have had the Town Hall operated and managed by our team, we believe that this would have produced a thriving facility – certainly better than what you have now!
- The project could have been a successful partnership between a Local Authority and a Community Group. Its failure goes beyond our local situation and makes other such partnerships elsewhere in the future less likely – a bad outcome.
- Your team breached Listed Building Regulations, a very serious offence, but simply dealt with it by self-granting a “Retrospective Listed Building Consent”. This needs a thorough investigation.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge safe receipt of this e-mail and look forward to hearing from you.

Brent Smith
[REDACTED]

NB: Email Address and Telephone Number Redacted