

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
23 OCTOBER 2019**

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF THE HITCHIN TOWN HALL AND DISTRICT WIDE MUSEUM PROJECT**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPROPRIATE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

To present the findings of the Review Panel following the review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1. receive the report of Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Review Panel; and
- 2.2. determine how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to proceed in relation to the recommendations as listed in part D, Appendix A of the submitted report, having regard to any comments as included in Appendix B of the submitted report.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 22 January 2019 the approach for the review into Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project. This report presents the findings following the review.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1. None, as it is a matter for the Committee to decide how to proceed following this review.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

5.1. The composition of the Panel loosely reflected the political proportionality of the authority (2:1:1) with Group Leaders, (pre May 2019 elections) nominating the Councillors. It was agreed that given the proposed timeline for the review that the appointed Members would be non-retiring Members (to avoid any duplication/new Panel Members having to familiarise themselves with the Panel's work).

5.2. The Panel determined that a generic invitation calling for written statements be prepared and advertised via the Council's dedicated webpage, which was promoted in a Press Release.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/museums/museum-and-town-hall-project/overview-and-scrutiny-review-hitchin-town-hall-and>

5.3. The Panel agreed to contact those who had been directly involved in the Project, and, in addition, over 100 Hitchin based community organisations were notified of the call for written statements.

5.4. A total of 14 statements were received, all of whom were invited to address the Panel over the course of three dates – 17 July, 18 July and 2 August 2019.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

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

## **7. BACKGROUND**

7.1. The review was instigated following a meeting between the former Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the former Leader of the Council and the Group Leaders for both the Labour and Co-Operative and Liberal Democrat parties on 6 November 2018. However, there had been an intention to hold a review for some time, once the venue had officially opened.

7.2. On 22 January 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the proposed approach for the review into Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

7.3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were informed at its meeting on 19 March 2019 of the appointment of Mr John Richardson as the Independent Chairman to the Panel and of the Councillors who had been nominated to the Panel by the respective Group Leaders, those being:

Councillors Sam Collins, Helen Oliver, Ian Moody and Valentine Shanley.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1. The Terms of Reference for the Review, presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 January 2019 were mostly accepted by the Panel with the exception that the word 'community' be removed before 'partners', on the grounds that there could be a range of individuals and organisations involved in the review, not all of them within the North Hertfordshire community.
- 8.2. The main focus of the Panel was to understand how the Council worked with partners during the Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project and identify lesson learnt for future partner working relationships.
- 8.3. The key areas for investigation by the Panel were:
  - 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.
  - To make recommendations to improve future partner working relationships.
- 8.4. Prior to publication of the agenda, The Leadership Team were presented with the Panel's report and offered the opportunity to comment, attached as Appendix B of the submitted report.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. As per the Overview and Scrutiny Terms of Reference, detailed in the Council's Constitution the Committee can:

6.2.7 (u) *'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'*; and can

6.2.7 (i) *'question and gather evidence from any other person, (with their consent)'*.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. As detailed in the delegated decision taken on 3 April 2019, the role of the Independent Chairman attracted a one-off honorarium payment of £1350 plus travel expenses, paid at the conclusion of the process.

- 10.2. There have also been peripheral expenditure from the budget in relation to the meetings and the Panel Members are entitled to submit expenses in accordance with the Members' Allowance Scheme.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. The Review Panel report is intended to provide lessons learned to assist the Council with minimising risks in the future. Any major project will involve risk, and these are identified, monitored and managed through a risk log.
- 11.2. Depending on how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to proceed in relation to the recommendations as listed in part D, Appendix A of the submitted report, there is a risk that the potential diversion of resources could affect the delivery of separate actions contained within service plans.

## **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. The completion of an equality impact assessment may be required to assess the impact of implementing any of the recommendations.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "Go Local" requirements do not apply to this report.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1. Depending on how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to proceed, in relation to the recommendations as listed in part D, Appendix A of the submitted report, may have further impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling and resources. It might also have 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 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Review Panel of Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

- 15.2. Appendix B - Comments of The Leadership Team regarding the Panel's report on the Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project, (highlighted in red).

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22 January 2019

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

- 17.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 19 March 2019

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

- 17.3 Overview and Scrutiny Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum Council webpage:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/museums/museum-and-town-hall-project/overview-and-scrutiny-review-hitchin-town-hall-and>

- 17.4 Record of Decision made under Delegated Authority – appointment of Mr John Richardson as the Independent Chairman for the Review Panel.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/decisions/delegated-decisions-2019>

- 17.5 Overview and Scrutiny Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum meetings on 17 July, 18 July and 2 August:

<http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=277>