

Civic Events Advisory Committee

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Civic Events Advisory Committee held on the **6th March 2024**.

Present:

Cllr. Hayward (Chair)

Cllrs. Chilton, Feacey, Giles, Iliffe, L Suddards

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (c) Councillor Feacey attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Krause.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Campkin, Krause, Ovenden.

Also Present:

Head of Economic Development, Head of Policy and Performance, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Tourism and Heritage Development Officer, Democratic Services Manager.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Feacey made a Voluntary Announcement as Chair of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.
- 1.2 Councillor Iliffe made a Voluntary Announcement as a member of the Ashford Twinning Association.

2 Draft Terms of Reference

- 2.1 A proposed draft Terms of Reference for this new Advisory Committee had been included with the agenda papers.
- 2.2 The Chair said that following discussion at the Full Council meeting the previous week, a line should be added to the Terms of Reference that this Advisory Committee would be involved in the process for recommending candidates for awards such as Freedom of the Borough and Honorary Aldermen. This was agreed.

Resolved:

That the Terms of Reference of the Civic Events Advisory Committee be agreed subject to the addition of the following: -

7. To make recommendations to Full Council regarding candidates for awards such as Freedom of the Borough and Honorary Aldermen.

3 Co-Option of External Members

- 3.1 The Advisory Committee noted that they had the ability to co-opt External Members to assist with their work should they so wish. Potential individuals were discussed, however Members considered that at this stage they did not wish to formally appoint anyone in this role. When relevant in the future, or for specific purposes, the Committee would support the co-option of relevant and appropriate individuals or organisations.

4 2024 Annual Programme of Civic and Ceremonial Events

- 4.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager introduced this item and explained that this programme included the events that the Council would be supporting during the next year, particularly under the banner of those that were both Civic and Ceremonial. It was accepted that there was a wider range of community events happening across the Borough, some of which would be supported by the Council, but this programme attempted to draw together the core events that linked back to this Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference.
- 4.2 Members noted that in addition to the core events mentioned, there were also a number of other community based events that took place in the Borough such as the Carnival of the Baubles, Create Music Village, Festival in the Park, Pride and many others. Some Members asked if these could also be recognised and promoted in a significant way. Officers advised that such events had the Council's support and, to varying degrees, their involvement, but with limited budget and officer resources, expectations did have to be managed. In recognition of this, Members wondered if in addition to this core programme, some sort of additional schedule of events happening in the Borough could be produced and promoted. The onus would have to be on organisers to let the Council know about their events, but the Council could perhaps put a message out for organisers to let them know if they were running an event in Ashford, and the Council would add it to its schedule and publicise it. Officers agreed to investigate a proportionate solution to this, perhaps involving the Safety Advisory Group process.
- 4.3 A Member said they hoped that efforts could be made to promote events that were more inclusive and reflected the diversity of the Borough's population.

Resolved:

That the 2024 Annual Programme of Civic and Ceremonial Events be received and noted and potential options to further publicise a wider range of community events be explored.

5 Plans to Mark D-Day – 6th June 2024

5.1 The Tourism and Heritage Development Officer gave an update on plans to mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings on the 6th June 2024. Potential activities were discussed and the Advisory Committee considered the following should be pursued: -

- A small flag raising event (of the D-Day 80 Flag of Peace) at the Civic Centre at 9am on the 6th June hosted by the Mayor.
- Engaging an educational facilitator to create activities that could be shared with local schools to encourage them to take part with their own events.
- Further wrap around activities including a section on the Council's website and a downloadable map of events and pack of resources for local children.
- The Mayor to host an event with tea and cake for VIPs, invited guests and veterans from the Royal British Legion. This could be accompanied by 1940s themed music and performances and involvement from local school children. Being able to hold this on the 6th June itself was seen as important and a potential venue of the Picturehouse Cinema was suggested.

5.2 The item was opened up for further discussion and the following responses were given to questions/comments: -

- There were no plans to light the beacon in Civic Park on this occasion. Members asked if consideration could be given to converting the gas beacon to a traditional beacon which would make it easier and more economical to use in the future.
- Members could decide to give some of their Ward Member Grants to D-Day events and activities in their own areas.

5.3 Post Meeting Note: Following questions raised at the meeting, and consultation with the Leader, who was unable to attend the meeting, it been suggested that for this special anniversary year the floral Spitfire installation be reinstated and arrangements be made for the Beacon in Civic Park to be lit. However, the Leader still has concerns that the costs associated with testing and lighting of the gas beacon are disproportionate and in these difficult financial times hard to justify.

Officers will be tasked with putting together an appropriate programme for the day and will reach out to the RBL to ensure their involvement and attendance.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted and the activities outlined above and in the Post Meeting Note form the basis of the Council's plans to mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day.

6 Civic Twinning Visit to Ashford – 19th to 23rd September 2024

- 6.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager advised that Ashford would be hosting the annual Twinning Visit this September involving Ashford's Twin Towns of Bad Münstereifel in Germany and Fougères in France. 2024 was a significant year in that it marked the 60th Anniversary of twinning with Bad Münstereifel and the 40th anniversary of twinning with Fougères. The Ashford Twinning Association delivered twinning activities on behalf of the Council. They had come up with a theme for the visit of "there and now – a celebration of twinning" and had made excellent progress in devising a programme that included young people being hosted at local schools and a number of other activities, culminating in a Civic Twinning Dinner on the final night. The Twinning Association hoped that as many Members as possible would get involved with the visit and they would be happy to provide more information to anyone interested.
- 6.2. A Member, who was also a member of the Twinning Association, said it would be a good idea to get the Association to come and speak to Councillors and perhaps share some detail, not only on this particular visit, but also wider twinning activity and the connections that had been forged.
- 6.3 In response to a question about extending twinning arrangements to other parts of the world, a Member advised that Ashford was also twinned with Hopewell, Virginia in the United States. It was felt that opportunities for further twinning in countries where Ashford also had connections, such as Nepal, should be explored.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted.

7 International House Office Move – Relocation of Civic Artefacts

- 7.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager advised that with the upcoming office move from the Civic Centre to International House, there were a number of civic artefacts that needed some consideration. The Civic Centre currently housed Simone Weil's vintager's hat, some bronzed railway wheels to mark the 150th anniversary of the railway coming to Ashford and the foundation stone and royal opening plaques for the Civic Centre. There would not be space to take these items to International House, so it was proposed to donate them to the Ashford Museum on a temporary loan basis so that they could continue to be on public display and be properly maintained, until such time that the Council had an alternative appropriate location for them.
- 7.2 Members were supportive of this approach. It was confirmed that the museum was a fully accredited museum who had to meet temperature and humidity standards and thus would be the safest and most appropriate place to house such artefacts.

Resolved:

That the update be received and noted and the plans endorsed and supported.

8 Any Other Business

Freedom of the Borough

- 8.1 The Head of Economic Development and Tourism and Heritage Manager gave an update on plans for the upcoming event on Wednesday 24th April at St Mary's Church in the Town Centre. Invitations would be sent out later that week.

Council Meeting Etiquette

- 8.2 The Chair advised that there had been a number of comments made about the dress code at meetings in the Council Chamber – particularly Full Council meetings. Whilst there was no formal dress code per se, it was generally expected and had been a tradition for male Councillors to wear shirt, tie and jacket. The Chair wondered if they were perhaps at a bit of a crossing point where this either needed to be reinforced or be reviewed.
- 8.3 Some Members considered that meetings in the Council Chamber, and particularly Full Council meetings chaired by the Mayor did require smart dress including ties. There were certain standards that should be upheld at these meetings, especially now that such meetings were being broadcast.

- 8.4 Other Members were of the view that there should be a bit more flexibility and in the modern business world, not everybody wore suits and ties. Some individuals may have sensory issues about wearing things around their necks for example and perhaps this was a question that should be posed of Councillors and brought back to this Advisory Committee.
- 8.5 It was agreed to discuss this matter with the Mayor and draft a letter to be sent out to Members reinforcing the current expectations. That letter to be shared with Members of this Advisory Committee before sending out. Thought to be given about a longer term review of the position.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Civic Events Advisory Committee is scheduled for Wednesday 4th September 2024 at 6pm.

Councillor Hayward
Chair – Civic Events Advisory Committee

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