

# **Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board**

Notes of a Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the **19<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**

## **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)

Cllrs. Buchanan, Burgess, Feacey, L Suddards, Webb (ex-officio)

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

## **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Dehnel, Ovenden.

## **Also Present:**

Head of Culture, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Heritage Development Officer, Civic Engagement Officer, Cultural Services Graduate Trainee, Member Services Manager (Operational).

Stephen Israel – The Company (for item 7 only).

## **1 Notes of the Previous Meeting of the Board – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

- 1.1 The notes of the Meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

## **2 Plans for VE Day – May 2020 - Update**

- 2.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager gave an update on developments since the last meeting and an outline of plans to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day in May 2020.
- 2.2 She advised that the Council's website now included dedicated VE Day 75 pages which included information and guidance on all aspects of the celebrations including how to hold street parties and applying for road closures etc. Parish Councils had also been contacted separately, including a specific reference to the 'Ring out for Peace' event at local churches on the evening of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May. This could be found at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/ve-day-celebrations>. A feature on Ashford's plans would also be included in the Spring edition of Ashford For You magazine and a proof of the article was circulated for the Board's attention.

- 2.3 In terms of more specific details, she advised that Aspire would be placing a VE Day 75 logo on the mound in the Memorial Gardens as well as hanging bunting and installing panels displaying a small photographic exhibition there. Local residents were being asked to send in their photos of VE Day celebrations across the Borough in 1945 for inclusion in the photographic exhibition, and indeed some had already been received. A press release would be issued on this shortly. Work was underway with Ashford Museum who would be hosting a range of VE Day children's activities in the museum on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May and who would be providing the artefacts for a Victory Trail in the town centre. Meetings had taken place with town centre businesses to encourage them to get involved, including putting up bunting, decorating shop windows, taking part in the Victory Trail and supporting the Toast to the Nation. She advised that Ashford would also be hosting the Flame of Remembrance VE75 Lanterns Tour on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May, with a short service in the Memorial Gardens at 11am. This would involve two lanterns being carried from Twickenham to Dover and then across the Channel to France, with various stops on the way, remembering all people affected by the Second World War.
- 2.4 The Tourism and Heritage Manager advised that the focus of the events would clearly be over the weekend of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. On the Friday, (now a National Bank Holiday), there would be: - Second World War themed music on the town centre bandstand with three acts between 12 noon and 3pm; the Toast to the Nation at 3pm; the 'Ringing Out For Peace' of church bells across the Borough in the evening; and an afternoon concert in the Memorial Gardens including a welcome from the Mayor, and music, readings and representation from the Army, Air and Naval Cadets and the Ashford Concert Band and the Kent Wing Air Cadets Band. The concert would close with the Last Post and the Mayor reading 'The Cry For Peace'. The rest of the weekend would hopefully see street parties across the Borough on the Saturday and Church Services on the Sunday morning, including a VE75 Service at St Mary's which would be attended by the Mayor who would read out the Nation's Tribute to the Millions poem.
- 2.5 The Board was extremely encouraged by the plans and thought they provided a fitting base for VE Day commemorations. There was some discussion about street parties and Members using their Ward Member grants for this purpose. Clearly, the new grant year did not start until 1<sup>st</sup> April and preparations for street parties would have to be made before then. A number of Members had already contributed towards such events from their 2019/20 grants. There was also a discussion about the potential location of street parties and it was stressed that these could be held on green spaces as well as in streets, and in some areas this may be preferable than having to close roads to through traffic.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress be noted and supported.**

### **3 Ashford Borough Heritage Plaque Scheme**

- 3.1 The Heritage Development Officer gave an update and advised that since the last Board Meeting a letter had been sent to the building owners of the four plaque recipients agreed at that Meeting. There had been positive responses from the Diocese of Kent regarding Dr John Wallis and Smallhythe Place for Ellen Terry. Responses were awaited regarding Sir John Fogge and Sir Norton Knatchbull. The Council's Housing Department had also confirmed it was happy for plaques to be placed on the wheel at Newtown to mark three individuals involved in the development of Ashford's Railway. Legal Services were currently working on a second draft of a licence between the Council and the building owners. Meetings had also taken place with the Council's Conservation Architects regarding Listed Building Consent and they had agreed to visit the various selected buildings to identify suitable locations for the plaques to be placed, to submit the Listed Building applications and to notify Historic England.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress be noted.**

### **4 Holocaust Memorial Day - Update**

- 4.1 The Heritage Development Officer advised that this had taken place on the 27<sup>th</sup> January and this year had marked 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz. To commemorate this, a small exhibition had taken place at the Ashford Gateway between the 3<sup>rd</sup> January and the 3<sup>rd</sup> February which had been attended by the Mayor and other Senior Councillors. Afterwards the Mayor had laid a posy at the Anne Frank tree in the Memorial Gardens. Members considered the exhibition had been well presented and simple to follow, but also touching and proportionate. It had been generally well attended and the printed literature had all been taken away.
- 4.2 In response to a question it was confirmed that the Council intended to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism as part of its new Equalities Policy later in the year.

**Resolved:**

**That the update be noted.**

### **5 Proposed Warship Week – HMS Albacore**

- 5.1 The Mayor introduced this item and advised that many would not be aware of Ashford's Naval connections and the involvement that Ashford had in the Second World War. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 1942 the minesweeper HMS Albacore had been adopted by the civil community of Ashford following a successful week of fundraising and public relations events in the Borough, raising money and awareness for the war effort. This was called "Warship Week". The forming of

the Sea Cadet Unit in June 1942 had followed on from the successful Warship Week and had been formally affiliated to HMS Albacore. The Mayor circulated some handouts which gave some more background on the battle honours of HMS Albacore as well as photos of the ship itself and of the two shields which had been presented to Ashford in 1942 by the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty to commemorate Ashford's adoption of HMS Albacore. It had been proposed, in order to mark Warship Week and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sea Cadets in Ashford, to hold a new Warship Week in Ashford in June 2022. This would encourage a re-engagement with Ashford's Naval and Sea Cadet history and the part that the Borough contributed to the war effort, of which she considered all should be extremely proud. The Mayor said she was excited about the particular project as it would encourage and entrust the youth of the Borough with the opportunity to celebrate this momentous episode in Ashford's history.

- 5.2 In terms of taking the project forward, the Mayor advised that she had already held meetings with Ashford Sea Cadets who were passionate about the project and were actively undertaking investigation into the history of this important link to the Borough. There were some elements that required further investigation and research with the museum, including a potential family link to Tenterden for the Ship's Commander and some original uniform potentially being in the museum. The shields which had been presented in 1942 were in the Ashford Museum and it was hoped that there could be some sort of ceremony to "re-dedicate" these and place them in a more prominent position from 2022. This could be accompanied by a celebration day with a parade, stalls, entertainment and military activity either in the Memorial Gardens or the Civic (North) Park.
- 5.3 The Board was extremely supportive of this project and agreed that it should be taken forward and investigated further, with a view to putting something significant together for June 2022. The Chairman considered it would also be worth pursuing the production of a replica of the photograph of HMS Albacore and perhaps some sort of landmark for the Memorial Gardens to go along with the re-dedicated plaques, such as an obelisk or similar. He thought the potential for VIP involvement in the event should also be explored (Government or Royalty).

**Resolved:**

**That the Board support the proposal moving forward and would support further research being undertaken as well as the development of a Project Initiation Document.**

## **6 Anniversary and Events Calendar**

- 6.1 The Board noted the calendar which would be a live document and remain on the Agenda for each Board Meeting.

- 6.2 Officers then gave brief updates on some other projects which were in the pipeline: -

### **Spitfire Installation – Battle of Britain Memorial**

- 6.3 The Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager reminded the Board that the proposed Aspire flower display for 2020 was a commemorative Spitfire in the Memorial Gardens. At the last Meeting Officers had been asked to investigate possibilities for extending the installation to include a ‘poppy drop’ around the Battle of Britain anniversary in September, and an event similar in nature to the ‘Battle’s Over’ installation in 2018, with the Spitfire installation also being moved to that event. Working with a Company on some sort of ‘Last Night of the Proms’ event had been suggested. Since the last meeting he had worked with the Portfolio Holder and it had become clear that as there was no budget for this project, in order to fund such an event and installation it would be necessary to again sell a product such as ceramic poppies or spitfires to the public, which could be collected after the event.
- 6.4 The Board considered that on balance this was not something they wished to pursue. There were inevitably comparisons to be drawn with the ‘Battle’s Over’ event in 2018 which had been impeccable, but that had been done properly and if that quality could not be reproduced at a reasonable cost, then it should not be done. It was considered that asking both sponsors and the public (through poppy purchases) to fund such an event rather than the money going to charity, relatively close to the last time, was probably not appropriate. There was also a feeling that the Battle of Britain was perhaps an event more worthy of ‘reflective commemoration’ than ‘celebration’. The existing plans for the Spitfire installation and some smaller scale events in Memorial Gardens were seen as sufficient and more fitting. It was however noted that it would be important to make the most of the Spitfire installation, which was going to be extremely impressive. It would be going into the Memorial Gardens in June/July and remain for the rest of the summer so it would be about publicising that it was there and encouraging people to bring a picnic and come and see it, with perhaps one or two light touch events on specific weekends. The Leader wondered that rather than creating the ‘poppy drop’ effect with actual poppies, it would be possible to produce some sort of netting to sit under the Spitfire and create the same effect.

### **Conserving Ashford’s First World War Tank**

- 6.5 The Tourism and Heritage Manager advised that the Council’s Corporate Property team had sent out a brief for a detailed structural survey of the tank to suitably qualified conservation specialists. The deadline for submissions was the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020. In response to a question the Leader said that there were longer term intentions to relocate the tank to a more suitable location.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the calendar of events be received and noted.**

## **7 Ashford Railway Theatre Project – Presentation from ‘The Company’.**

- 7.1 Stephen Israel from ‘The Company’ gave a presentation on the current position with plans to put on a large scale multi-media theatre project detailing the history of Ashford and the Railways. A progress report had been circulated with the papers for the meeting and he expanded on points regarding: - recruitment to key posts; development of the script and creative following the collection of various oral histories; implementation of the project plan; the various venues that would be used for the shows; the legacy of the oral histories; and performance dates and how to buy tickets. He said that the support of the Council had been appreciated and he hoped that would continue in terms of publicity and being ambassadors for the show and perhaps obtaining volunteer stewards, which would all be vital to making the event a success. Despite not wanting to give too much away, Stephen concluded by advising that he and his team were very excited about the project and said that the final show would be something to be proud of.
- 7.2 Board Members said they were excited about the project and the energy and enthusiasm of Stephen and those involved. The initial idea for this project had come from the previous History and Heritage Task Group who had wanted to see the history of Ashford and the Railways documented and animated in some way, so it was pleasing to see it come to fruition. The legacy of this project was also an important consideration. It was pleasing to see that the oral histories would be retained and it was hoped that recordings of the performance and the music could be kept and perhaps made available for screening around the Borough as a real legacy of community participation. Officers advised that there were various avenues to pursue volunteer stewards, including Cadets, and they would liaise with Stephen over this.

### **Resolved:**

**That the progress be noted and supported.**

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

- 8.1 Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 12.00 noon in the Council Chamber.

Councillor Clarkson  
Chairman – Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

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