

Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the **25th January 2023**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)
Cllr. Forest (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Feacey, Harman, Lyn Suddards, Webb (ex-officio).

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Burgess, Iliffe, Ovenden, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager.

Also Present:

Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Civic Officer, Tourism and Heritage Development Officer, Member Services Officer, Member Services Manager.

1 Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Councillor Feacey made a Voluntary Announcement as Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre and Chairman of the Ashford International Development Company.
- 1.2 Councillor Webb made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of the Ashford Volunteer Centre and President of the Ashford Sea Cadets.

2 Notes of the Previous Meeting of the Board – 26th October 2022

- 2.1 The notes of the Meeting held on the 26th October 2022 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.

3 Civic Update (including Feedback on Remembrance 2022 and Updates on Freedom of the Borough Parade and HMS Albacore Day)

- 3.1 The Civic Officer introduced her report which gave an update on activity in the Civic Office including: - Remembrance 2022; forthcoming diary dates; HMS Albacore Day; and the REME Freedom of the Borough Parade.

- 3.2 With specific reference to Remembrance, the Civic Officer said she wanted to express thanks to the new Ashford branch of the Royal British Legion for their assistance this year and getting the activities back on track from a military point of view. Members who had attended Remembrance Sunday this year said it had been a real success story and thanked all those involved in the organisation. The Remembrance Sunday Church Service, before the main service in the Memorial Gardens, had been a positive addition and the Board said it would support that becoming a permanent feature of the morning.
- 3.3 The Mayor introduced plans for HMS Albacore Day on 28th February. This would include a small flag raising ceremony outside the Civic Centre and the unveiling of the minesweeper's badge and information panel in the Civic Corridor on Level 2 of the Civic Suite, followed by refreshments. This would conclude the year's activity with the Ashford Sea Cadets on HMS Albacore, of which the Mayor said she had been extremely proud.
- 3.4 In conclusion, the Civic Officer drew attention to the REME's Freedom of the Borough Parade on Sunday 19th February. There was a meeting scheduled for the following week, with REME, to go through the arrangements and they were working with both the Safety Advisory Group and the ABC Communications team to ensure the event went smoothly.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

4 Feedback on the Ashford 180 Celebrations

- 4.1 The Tourism and Heritage Development Officer advised that AIMREC's programme of events to recognise the 180th anniversary of the Railway arriving in Ashford in November 1842, had taken place over the weekend of 19th and 20th November. He had attached AIMREC's Event and Visitor Feedback Report to the agenda for information, the headline of which had been the attraction of over 700 visitors to the events in the town including 400 visitors to the Ashford Museum. AIMREC were already looking to arrange a similar event during 2023.
- 4.2 The Vice-Chairman said it was important to recognise that AIMREC had arranged this programme themselves and really risen to the challenge and delivered something special. It was agreed that a letter be sent to AIMREC, from the Mayor, praising and thanking them for their work on this event.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted and a letter be sent to AIMREC, from the Mayor, congratulating them on the Ashford 180 Celebrations.

5 Update on Holocaust Memorial Day

- 5.1 The Tourism and Heritage Development Officer advised this was taking place on Friday 27th January. There would be a short service in the Memorial Gardens where the Mayor would lay a posy at the Anne Frank tree, complemented by the exhibition at the Gateway building which the Mayor would also attend. ABC had received a request from KMTV to film at the event and ask the Mayor questions, which was agreed subject to a briefing from the ABC Communications team.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

6 80th Anniversary of the 1943 Bombing Raid on Ashford – 24th March 2023

- 6.1 The Tourism and Heritage Development Officer updated on plans to hold a small service of reflection in the Memorial Gardens to mark this occasion. They were also in discussions to loan some Second World War artefacts and photographs from Ashford Museum and have them on display in the Gateway building. A local author, Ed Adams, had written a book - Ashford at War and there were plans for him to be present on the day as well.
- 6.2. A Member asked about the book and wondered if there was any information in there about what happened in the villages. She wondered if that information could be used to broaden out the focus on bombing raids that happened across the Borough. The Tourism and Heritage Development advised that the book did contain several maps pinpointing the location of all the bombing raids across the Borough. The focus of this was mainly what had happened in the town, particularly at the Railway Works, but he would be happy to do some research and put any information he found on the website.
- 6.3 The Leader mentioned work he had been involved in regarding the Newtown Memorial Monument to mark these raids, which he would expand upon later at the meeting. He wanted to thank the Tourism and Heritage Development Officer for his valuable work in researching this whole topic.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

7 Coronation of King Charles III

- 7.1 The Civic Officer advised the following new information being made available from Buckingham Palace, a cross departmental working group had met to discuss plans for Ashford. It was anticipated that activity would again be badged under the banner 'Ashford Celebrates' as it was for the recent Jubilee.

- 7.2 It had been confirmed that the Coronation Ceremony would take place on Saturday 6th May 2023 at Westminster Abbey, followed by the Coronation Procession and balcony appearance. Sunday 7th would see the Coronation Concert in Windsor and focus would also turn to the 'Coronation Big Lunch', with street parties and gatherings encouraged. Monday 8th May had been designated as an additional Bank Holiday and had been labelled the 'Big Help Out', to highlight the positive impact that volunteering had on communities across the nation. This would encourage people to try volunteering and join work being undertaken to support their local areas.
- 7.3 In terms of what was proposed to happen in Ashford, on Saturday 6th a live screening of the Coronation Ceremony and community event was planned for Victoria Park. This would involve a big screen to show the Coronation, followed by a stage show of multi-cultural performances during the afternoon (live music, dancers, choirs etc). Families would be encouraged to attend with a picnic and enjoy the day together. It would also provide an opportunity to 'show off' the improvements at Victoria Park. There would then be a special Civic Church Service at St Mary's on the morning of Sunday 7th May. Similar to the Jubilee, the Council would provide advice and promotion to anyone planning their own events in the Borough over that weekend and the Council was also talking to the Town Centre team and 'Love Ashford' regarding how the town centre businesses could get involved leading up to, and during the Coronation weekend.
- 7.4 It was noted that with the Local Elections on Thursday 4th May, and Election Count on Friday 5th, followed by the Coronation, it would be a particularly busy weekend for the Council and resources would be extremely stretched, so it was important to keep things manageable. It was also noted that there had been a direct directive from the Palace that beacons were not to be lit on this occasion.
- 7.5 The Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation advised that unfortunately, due to the date of the Coronation, there would not be any bedding plants in place that weekend, as it would be between planting seasons.

Resolved:

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

8 Newtown Monument Memorial

- 8.1 The Leader gave a verbal update and shared a draft design for the monument planned for the Newtown Works site. This would commemorate those who lost their lives at a bombing raid at the railway works in 1943, the largest single loss of life in Kent during the Second World War. The Memorial would also recognise the railway works itself dating back to 1847, as well as the RAF who defended this part of Kent during the war. He had been discussing

this with both the Ashford International Development Company (owners of the site) and the South Willesborough and Newtown Community Council, who were both supportive and the process would continue.

9 Events Calendar

- 9.1 This set out the above for 2023 - 2026. This was a live document and it would be updated as Officers became aware of new anniversaries and events. Members were encouraged to input with any events that they were aware of for addition to the calendar.

Resolved:

That the Events Calendar be received and noted.

10 Any Other Business

International Women's Day 2023

- 10.1 This fell on 8th March and Councillor Lyn Suddards advised of plans to mark this with an event on Sunday 5th March 2023. There would be a march from the Fountain in Victoria Park via Elwick Place, Bank Street, the Lower High Street and Station Road, with the procession being led by the Mayor. This would arrive at the Coachworks at approximately 3pm with a Mayoral welcome and an introductory speech about International Women's Day. This would be followed by musical performances by young female artistes and Iranian musical acts and an array of speakers. Food and drink would be available throughout at the Coachworks.
- 10.2 It was agreed that International Women's day should be added to the Events Calendar going forward.

59th (Newfoundland) Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery – Ashford's Forgotten History

- 10.3 The Tourism and Heritage Development Officer reminded the Board that at its last meeting, they had agreed to establish a working group with Ashford School and other interested parties to promote this. They had held the first meeting the previous week and a number of actions had been proposed to best promote this, namely: - running two articles in the Ashford For You magazine (one in the summer edition and one in the autumn one); a physical marker/plaque on the school grounds at the location of the Commander's HQ; the potential planting of a monkey puzzle tree in a suitable, publically accessible location to commemorate the 59th Regiment; and the potential adoption of a commemorative flag.
- 10.4 The Board welcomed the suggestions and said there was a great deal of willingness to work together to promote the history of this Regiment and to deliver something to commemorate it. The articles in Ashford For You were

unanimously supported as were the commemorative plaques. It was agreed to examine whether this could be accommodated as part of the Council's own Heritage Plaque scheme. The planting of a monkey puzzle tree, whilst supported in principle, may need some careful consideration regarding a suitable location as whilst it needed to be publically accessible, such trees did grow to an extremely large size. The potential adoption of a flag was also something to give further consideration to.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the Board is currently scheduled for Wednesday 26th April 2023 at 2.30pm.

Councillor Clarkson
Chairman – Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

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