

Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

Notes of a Meeting of the Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board held on the **20th November 2019**.

Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Feacey, Harman, Webb (ex-officio).

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

Apologies:

Cllr. N Ovenden.

Also Present:

Cllr. Buchanan

Head of Culture, Head of Environment and Land Management, Tourism and Heritage Manager, Member Services Liaison Manager, Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Heritage Development Officer, Civic Engagement Officer, Member Services Research Assistant, Member Services Manager (Operational).

1 Notes of the Last Meeting of the Previous Borough, History, Heritage and Commemoration Task Group – 23rd January 2019

- 1.1 The notes of the Meeting held on the 23rd January 2019 were approved and confirmed as a correct record.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed all present to the first meeting of this newly titled Board. He considered it would be a very important Board in nurturing more pride in the Borough's rich history and heritage and continuing to commemorate those elements in a fitting and dignified way.

2 Planning for VE Day – May 2020

- 2.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager introduced the report which set out ideas for projects to form Ashford's VE Day celebrations in 2020 (8th to 10th May 2020). The report sought Members' views on the proposals and for any of their own ideas to take forward.
- 2.2 The Tourism and Heritage Manager advised that national guidance had been issued by the Queen's Pageant Master at www.veday75.org and a tentative

schedule of events for the three days was outlined in the report. These included: - Playing of the Last Post; Bagpipers; The Nation's Toast to the Heroes of WW2; Town Criers; Church Bells; Street Parties and Celebrations and Church Services. Officers in Cultural Services had begun to contact local Parish/Community Councils to ask what was being planned in their local areas so that these could be promoted in a co-ordinated way. It was suggested that Members may also wish to consider supporting such local community activities and projects from a designated part of their Ward Member Grants. The Leader agreed that he would write to all Members asking them to give consideration to using some of their 2020/21 Member Grants in this way. The report was opened up to comments/questions and the following points were made: -

- It was considered important that whilst the Council clearly had a role to play in the commemorations, it did not overstretch itself and it was important that what it did do, it did well. Town/Parish and Community Councils had already started planning for their own events and the Council could consider devising a 'Party Pack' for event organisers, to support them and make it easier for them to liaise with the Safety Advisory Group (SAG), KCC Highways and to give them information on road closures etc. A Member said she would mention this at the upcoming KALC meeting and encourage Local Councils to keep ABC informed about their plans. It was considered that everything possible should be done to assist and encourage anyone who wanted to organise a commemorative event.
- It was considered that a co-ordinated ringing of church bells across the Borough at 7pm on the 8th May 2020, would be a relatively simple and cheap to arrange event, which would also be a very effective and fitting way to mark the occasion. It was agreed that the Council should write a letter to all of the Local Councils advising them of this national event and encouraging them to take part.
- The proposed Aspire flower display for 2020 was a commemorative Spitfire in the Memorial Gardens. It was explained that this would not be ready for VE Day weekend in May though as it was too early in the planting year. It would be in place shortly after, and certainly for the Battle of Britain Anniversary later in the Summer. For VE Day, Aspire were looking to use the mound in the Memorial Gardens as a backdrop, temporarily replacing the ABC Crest with the VE Day logo as a centrepiece, accompanied by associated bunting. There was also potential for additional flags and art or photographic exhibitions in other parts of the gardens. In terms of the Spitfire, there were options to extend the installation to include a 'poppy drop' around the Battle of Britain anniversary in September. This would be on a similar basis to the successful 'Battles Over' installation in 2018, where the public could purchase ceramic poppies for a donation. It was considered that perhaps the Council's focus should be more on facilitating VE Day events, with a more specific Council focused event for the Battle of Britain anniversary. This would need to be properly costed and there

would be additional considerations in terms of workloads and security. The Head of Environment and Land Management said her team would put a proposal together and come back to this Board with further details.

- Initial ideas for Council led events in the Town Centre over the weekend included: - a VE Day Treasure Hunt Trail; Replication of the National Guidance but with the addition of live music; encouraging all Town Centre pubs and eateries to participate in “The Nation’s Toast”; displays of dance taking inspiration from a picture of people dancing in Ashford’s Lower High Street on VE Day (a copy of this picture was tabled); an evening concert at Revelation St Mary’s; live music at the bandstand; an afternoon tea dance; and a multi-faith service at St Mary’s on Sunday 10th May.
- Francourt Events were organising a Rugby Flame of Remembrance Tour and Charity Cycle Ride in aid of military charity SSAFA and youth rugby charity Wooden Spoon, with a potential stop in Ashford on 7th May 2020. In addition to the cyclists, there would be military personnel including a number of Chelsea Pensioners in attendance. It was considered that this should be marked properly with a small reception in the Memorial Gardens including water stations and refreshments and perhaps tailoring some of the installations in the Gardens to those taking part in the ride. The Tourism and Heritage Manager would keep abreast of this event as it developed.

The Board considered that the plans outlined in the report and the comments given at the meeting provided a good steer for Officers to begin preparations.

Resolved

- That**
- (i) the projects outlined in the report and clarified in discussions at this meeting form the basis of Ashford’s VE Day Celebrations for 2020 and further work be undertaken to take them forward within an agreed budget (there is up to £10,000 allocated within the Culture, Leisure and Tourism budget for commemorative activities).**
 - (ii) all Parish/Town and Community Councils be written to advising them of the national ringing of Church bells event at 7pm on Friday 8th May 2020 and encouraging them to take part.**
 - (iii) the Head of Environment and Land Management and her team put together a proposal around a poppy installation and event to mark the Battle of Britain Anniversary in September 2020, and report back to Members of this Board.**

3 Ashford Borough Heritage Plaque Scheme

- 3.1 The Heritage Development Officer introduced the report which advised of the Ashford Borough Heritage Plaque Scheme and included three spreadsheets of potential nominees. The Cabinet had previously agreed that two nominees were put forward in order to get the project started, test the eligibility criteria and understand any issues in terms of legal agreements, planning consents and installation. Officers also displayed some examples of the type of plaque that may be used and asked for agreement of a preferred template.
- 3.2 During discussion on this item the following points were agreed to be taken forward: -
- The plaque should be a green circle, with a white border and white text in capital letters. It should read “Ashford Borough” at the top but not include the word “Council”. The Coat of Arms should also be smaller than shown on the example to allow more room for text.
 - Four nominees were agreed to be taken forward in the first tranche – Dr John Wallis; Ellen Terry; Sir John Fogge and Sir Norton Knatchbull. George Harper, another nominee was also discussed and it was agreed that this be taken forward, but to coincide with the completion of the Heritage Lottery Fund works in Victoria Park.
 - There had already been discussions about providing three plaques for individuals involved in the development of Ashford’s Railway. It was explained that the installation of a total of between eight and thirteen plaques had been budgeted for in the initial project. The scheme would be opened up for public nominations so it was important to consider how many nominations Members agreed before doing that. In the case of the aforementioned railway representatives, there were perhaps options to deal with these separately (but using the same design of plaque for all the individuals), and in conjunction with the Designer Outlet. In terms of the wider picture, there was also the option of replacing existing recognitions that had fallen in to disrepair, rather than creating something new at a higher cost.

Resolved

- That
- (i) Dr John Wallis, Ellen Terry, Sir John Fogge and Sir Norton Knatchbull be taken forward for the first phase of the scheme (subject to building owner/legal consents being granted).**
 - (ii) the plaques should be a green circle, with a white border and white text in capital letters. They should read “Ashford Borough” at the top with a small Coat of Arms and room for text.**
 - (iii) the public nomination process be via an online form on the Council’s website.**

4 Protocol for the Lighting of the Ashford Memorial Civic Beacon

- 4.1 The Tourism and Heritage Manager introduced the report which sought agreement on which occasions the Ashford Memorial Civic Beacon should be lit to mark occasions of national celebration and historical anniversaries. It was proposed that a corporate team with cross-service representation would be set up to co-ordinate such events. She explained that generally, notifications of national beacon lighting events were communicated by the Queen's Pageant Master along with guidance on the format that the event should take. The corporate team would take the lead from that advice but would also be open to comments from this Board and Members more generally.

Resolved

- That (i) **Ashford's Memorial Civic Beacon should be lit to mark occasions of national celebration and nationally historical anniversaries and it would fall to the Mayor of Ashford, as the Queen's representative in the Borough, to lead the beacon lighting ceremony.**
- (ii) **responsibility for such events be co-ordinated by a corporate team, with the appropriate Service depending on the event's nature, taking the lead.**

5 Options for Conserving Ashford's WW1 Tank

- 5.1 The report outlined options to conserve Ashford's Mark IV WW1 Tank. A recent basic condition survey had revealed that "the tank was 'basically stable' but 'at risk' of collapse in the next 15-20 years. It was in critical need of large-scale intervention to re-establish structural integrity and to conduct extensive conservation treatment of the metal to safeguard the future. There was also an issue of public health and safety, given that the structure had full public access."
- 5.2 The Portfolio Holder for Culture advised that this project was currently on a reserve list, but he considered it should be a priority. The Tank was deteriorating relatively quickly and, as a registered War Memorial, it was important that something was done as soon as possible. The Board agreed to pursue Option B in the report – to engage a suitably qualified/accredited conservation specialist to undertake a detailed structural and mechanical survey of the tank, and considered that a budget should be identified as such.

Resolved

- That (i) **Option B in the report – to engage a suitably qualified/accredited conservation specialist to undertake a detailed structural and mechanical survey of the tank, should be pursued.**
- (ii) **the Board would support a modernised listing application being pursued.**

6 Anniversary and Events Calendar

- 6.1 The Chairman said he had been keen for this Board to create an anniversary and events calendar to use as a reference document with a three to five year horizon. This would help both Members and Officers to better plan for civic and cultural events to be commemorated or celebrated. It was agreed that this would be a live document and remain on the Agenda for each Board Meeting.
- 6.2 A Member suggested the 50th Anniversary of Ashford Borough Council in 2024 should be added to the calendar.
- 6.3 The report also outlined progress being made by *The Company* (Ashford and the Railways Project) in respect of their project to create a play celebrating the role of the railways in Ashford, to be performed in 2020. It was agreed to invite them to present to this Board in the new year.

Resolved

- That (i) **the calendar of events be received and noted.**
- (ii) **the progress being made by *The Company* (Ashford and the Railways Project) be noted and they be invited to present to this Board in the new year.**

7 Programme Updates

Honorary Alderman Scheme

- 7.1 The Leader advised that the first Group of Honorary Alderman had been conferred on the 17th October 2019. The ceremony had been an extremely successful event and very well received by the recipients and their families. He wanted to thank everyone involved, but in particular the Member Services Research Assistant who had done so much to pull the whole event together.

Remembrance Sunday

- 7.2 The Council had taken part in the usual Remembrance Sunday Service in the Memorial Gardens on the 10th November. The event had gone well and the Leader wanted to place on record his thanks to Councillor Dehnel, the

Council's Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison Champion, who had done so much to liaise with the Military and to make sure the event was a success.

- 7.3 Officers advised that there had been a few comments made about sightlines in the gardens and how the marches and wreath laying had not been visible to all in the lower gardens. It was explained that this was a historical concern. All understood the safety need to restrict access to the part of the gardens where the memorial stood during the service, and sightlines had been greatly improved for the public by removing planting and hedging, but there was potential for a re-think of how the Civic Party accessed the Memorial Gardens in order to allow more people to see. The Member Services Liaison Manager advised that Councillor Dehnel was pulling together a "wash-up" letter containing learning points from this year's service and following that it may be useful to organise a meeting with the British Legion and the Military to discuss future plans.

8 Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 Wednesday 19th February 2020 at 12.00 noon in Committee Room No. 2.

Councillor Clarkson
Chairman – Civic and Ceremonial Programme Board

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services
Telephone: (01233) 330349 Email: membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.moderngov.co.uk