

Ref:

Called in

Yes/No

THE THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION OF INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

Name of Cabinet Member:

Relevant Portfolio:

Date of Decision:

Subject:

Key Decision In Forward Plan

Brief summary of matter:

Following the recent Black Lives Matter campaign and the concern about statues and other commemorative artifacts which are no longer acceptable, the Leader gave consideration to similar artifacts in the District.

In particular this concerned the memorial plaque to James Summerson, known as 'Uncle Mack', a seaside entertainer in Broadstairs between the 1880s and 1940s. This plaque has given rise to offence and hurt because the entertainment celebrated by it involved a Black and White Minstrels troupe where white entertainers blacked up their faces and behaved with distorted African-American stereotypes.

The plaque was initially covered up as a temporary measure until a decision was made on a permanent solution. Once removed, consideration will be given to the future of the plaque and whether it can usefully be put on display in a museum setting which describes its historical context to act as a lesson for the future.

Decision made:

The Leader has decided that the James Summerson ('Uncle Mack') memorial plaque should be permanently removed from its site in Broadstairs.

Reasons for decision:

Consideration was given to (i) the Council's public sector equality duty and in particular the advancement of equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and (ii) the raised sensitivities as a result of the Black Lives Matter campaign.

Alternatives considered and why rejected:

It could have stayed in place since the plaque represents what was acceptable a hundred years ago. However this might give the mistaken impression that the Council condoned this offensive entertainment and its racist overtones. It is also important that the Leader and the Council sends out a clear message to the Thanet community, that it listens and will act to maintain and foster good relations in the community.

Details of any conflict of interest declared by any executive Member who has been consulted and of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None

Author of Officer report:

Tim Howes

Background papers

None

Statement if decision is an urgent one and therefore not subject to call-in:

None

Last date for call-in:

7 July 2020