

Memorials Working Party Update Report

Overview & Scrutiny Panel 19 January 2021

Report Author Committee Service Manager

Status For Information

Classification: Unrestricted

Key Decision No

Ward: Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

This report is to provide an update to the Panel on the activities of the Memorials Working Party.

Recommendation(s):

Members are requested to comment on the update and note the report.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There were no financial and value for money implications arising directly from the report.

Legal

There were no legal implications arising directly from the report

Corporate

The working parties assist the work of scrutiny as they would carry-out an in-depth study of any issue referred to the groups under their terms of reference. An active Scrutiny programme is part of good governance..

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Memorials Working Party was set up on 21 July 2020 by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in order to enable the Panel to review the schedules of memorial statues and plaques to gain an understanding of the type and style of public memorials in Thanet. This review includes street and building names and other monuments in the district..

1.2 In conducting its work, the working party was asked to consider whether it needed advice, guidance or information from witnesses or consider best practice from other public bodies to assist its deliberations. That included:

- Identifying existing ways of assessing memorials (e.g. the Public Sector Equality Duty);
- Identifying other criteria;
- Identifying and seeking views of external experts or interested parties.

1.3 The working party was further asked to consider the points raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which were:

- This was a significant issue;
- It was important to consider as a community and as a society what the priorities are and how the community recognised and respected its members;
- How society viewed its history is important, particularly if that involved recognising those communities who have been affected by racism;
- The equality legislation should guide the work of the council in addressing this issue, particularly the aims contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010;
- One of the criteria to consider was the time in which people lived, what they did the effect on society at that time;
- Society should not hide their history. Instead the plaques should be left where they were and inform people what this was about and let people make up their own minds;
- Public involvement in the decision making for addressing this issue is important;
- Displaying in a museum is not necessarily an endorsement. However displaying something out in the community appears to be an endorsement;
- It is important to speak to those groups of society that are affected by this issue.

1.4 At the conclusion of their work, the working party was then asked to thereafter recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and to the Executive:

1. A draft system, process or criteria for reviewing memorials (e.g. statues, plaques, road-names and similar matters), to help to determine whether (if

requested) a decision should be taken to either remove them or carry out some other act

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 The Memorials Working Party first met on 30 September and considered a report by the Monitoring Officer on developing the criteria for reviewing and plaques in the district.

2.2 They met again on 25 November, considered the response to their initial consultation and made the following observations:

- There was a widespread discussion which included the following matters:
- The context of statues etc. change over time;
- Could the existing statues' purpose be changed, so they became a tool to educate people?
- History cannot be changed, but we can educate the future;
- There is a need to be honest about our past;
- Council should consider new and proposed statues and memorials, not just the existing ones. Examples included those being considered by Turner Contemporary and a statue to celebrate George IV at Ramsgate;
- Whilst Thanet's stance is positive, some authorities e.g. Liverpool City Council are further advanced and we should seek to learn from them;
- Whilst the Council does not have the resources to proactively review every statue and memorial, Members can be proactive in encouraging the public to make representations on existing statues etc;
- The Council should have a foundation statement to describe the context of our review of statues and memorials etc;
- The lead officer would look at the approach taken by Liverpool City Council;
- The lead officer would prepare a foundation statement to set out the context of the work of the sub group.

Additional information is found in the minutes in this link: <https://thanet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MId=5599&Ver=4>.

2.3 Once the officer's update report was ready, Members would be meeting again to consider if there was any more work that needed doing or conclude their work by making recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

3.0 Options

3.1 The Panel can provide further steer to the working party or comment and on and note the update report.

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Annex List

None

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: *(Insert name and job title)*

Legal: *(Insert name and job title)*