



Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 18 January 2021

Title: Remembrance Sunday and memorial cleaning budgets

Purpose of the Report: To seek Committee endorsement for budget recommendations in respect of Remembrance Sunday and memorial cleaning.

Contact Officer: Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
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Corporate Objective/s	N/A	
Implications:		
Financial	Yes	See recommendations
Human Resources	None	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To enable the Council to source appropriate skills and equipment from specialist contractors
Procedural/Legal	None	
Risk/Health and Safety	None	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should Members be minded, the proposals are to:

- 1.1 To endorse that the Town Council continues to broadcast (either live or recorded) the acts of remembrance from both Leighton Buzzard and Linslade war memorials on Remembrance Sunday, following the success of this initiative in 2020.
- 1.2 To endorse that the revenue budget allocation for this event be increased from £2,500 to £3,500 from 2021-22 onwards for this purpose.
- 1.3 To endorse the one-off cost of £7,000 to be met from the Future Projects earmarked reserve for cleaning of the war memorials and the steps of the Market Cross.

- 1.4 To endorse that from the 2022-23 budget, an annual allocation of £3,500 be included for memorial cleaning (to be kept in an earmarked reserve until cleaning required, usually every second year).**

SECTION 1: REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 24 August 2020, the Town Council endorsed the status of Remembrance Sunday as a civic function, following correspondence received from the Royal British Legion advising that acts of remembrance should be organised primarily by local councils.
- 2.2 The Council further endorsed the creation of an annual revenue budget line from 2021-22 onwards in the amount of £2,500 for this purpose.
- 2.3 As in previous years, the Town Council worked closely with parties including the churches, the Royal British Legion and uniformed groups on preparations for Remembrance Sunday 2020.
- 2.4 However, as a result of the restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the event could not take place in its usual format. No parade took place and residents were encouraged to stay at home to commemorate and remember. Socially distanced, short services with restricted attendance numbers took place at the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade war memorials.
- 2.5 To allow residents to watch the services despite not being able to attend in person, it was decided to publish a live-stream from Church Square to the Town Council's Facebook page. This was made possible by accessing the internet connection of a local organisation and also utilising recordings provided by All Saints Church. The live stream was watched by some 200 people on 8 November.
- 2.6 The service from the Linslade Garden of Remembrance was recorded by mobile phone but could not be live-streamed due to a lack of internet connection.
- 2.7 The recordings of both services were made available on the internet later that day and continue to be available to view on the Town Council's YouTube channel.
- 2.8 Feedback from residents was very positive, with thanks and appreciation expressed that people could still participate in the acts of remembrance despite not being able to attend in person. In particular, the highly professional quality of the live stream was praised.

3. 2021 ONWARDS

- 3.1 Following Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, a meeting took place with all parties involved in the organisation of the events. This was an opportunity to express thanks to all and to review what had gone well and what could be improved in future.
- 3.2 It was agreed by all parties that the live streaming and recording had been very well received by residents and that consideration should be given to doing this again in future, even if the 2020 restrictions were no longer applicable. This would allow not just current residents but former residents and any interested parties to view the acts of remembrance online, without having to be physically present.
- 3.3 Whilst both All Saints Church and St Barnabas Church have sought a financial contribution from the Town Council to provide live streaming of services, their equipment and internet connection can only be used inside the two churches.
- 3.4 Therefore, to undertake future live-streaming (or recording with later broadcasting) of events from the war memorials, the use of specialist suppliers would be necessary, as well as the ability to access internet connection.
- 3.5 Costs for the 2020 event were met from the Central Administration/Professional Fees budget (12/4384) due to there being no revenue budget provision, and amounted to just under £4,000.
- 3.6 This included a cost for provision of security stewards, which may not necessarily be required in future years, or not on the same scale. Removing this element, the anticipated event costs are estimated, as of December 2020, to be in the region of £3,350.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Town Council has taken huge strides this year in taking advantage of digital technology to bring events online and this has been well received by residents. Continuing to do so will allow a greater number of people to participate in our events and is particularly important for such an emotive and important event as Remembrance Sunday.
- 4.2 The Committee is asked to consider the recommendations as set out at 1.1 and 1.2 to allow broadcasting of Remembrance Sunday events from 2021 onwards.

SECTION 2: MEMORIAL CLEANING

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Historically the Town Council has arranged for specialist cleaning of the town's memorials when required, funded on an ad hoc basis from reserves. There is currently no provision within the annual revenue budget for this purpose.
- 5.2 The Council has always recognised the need for specialist professional expertise in cleaning the memorials in order to protect them. The Council's usual supplier uses only cleaning methods approved by both English Heritage and the War Memorials Trust.
- 5.3 Cleaning must not be undertaken too frequently or despite the careful and delicate methods used, there is an increased risk of damage to the monuments. It is recommended that cleaning be no more frequent than every second year.
- 5.4 Following the Listing of both the Leighton Buzzard and Linslade war memorials, increased protections are in place which affect the works which can be undertaken to the memorials, including cleaning and maintenance. Consent will have to be sought before works can be undertaken.
- 5.5 The memorials are due for cleaning in 2021 and the Committee is asked to consider approving the one-off use of the Future Projects earmarked reserve for this purpose. Costs are anticipated to be in the region of £7,000 for both war memorials and the steps of the Market Cross, a scheduled ancient monument with the highest level of protections. The Market Cross Trustees will be engaged in advance of any cleaning programme being considered and thereafter implemented.
- 5.6 To ensure budget provision for future works, the Committee is asked to consider inclusion in the annual budget of £3,500 per year from 2022-23, with a view to retaining funds in an earmarked reserve to be called upon when works are required.

End.