

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

**Report of Matthew Gladstone,
Executive Director Place**

Recognising the Impact of Covid 19 and the Contributions Made

1. Purpose of report

To endorsement of the concept and approach to the development of four initiatives that will recognise the impact of COVID 19, allow people to remember their loved ones and also celebrate the contribution of key workers and others during the pandemic crisis. The report recognises that Area Councils and Ward Alliances may wish to make local arrangements in addition to these proposed.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that:

- a) The concept of developing a Memorial Sculpture which also recognises the contribution of key workers is endorsed.
- b) Mayor's Special Award Medals are introduced
- c) The review of the Freedom of the Borough Scheme in 2021 incorporates an opportunity to recognise the impact of Covid 19 and the contributions made
- d) A virtual Book of Condolence is established

3. Background

3.1 Covid 19 is a disease caused by the Novel Coronavirus, it was declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. To date more than six million cases have been reported in 188 countries with at least 360,000 deaths worldwide. The UK infection rate is thought to have reached its peak and despite social distancing measures there have already been over 275,000 confirmed cases with almost 40,000 deaths. In Barnsley there are currently almost 1,000 confirmed cases. People in the Borough have already lost loved ones to this disease and excess deaths from all causes have also significantly increased during the pandemic. As we are currently in the midst of the crisis unfortunately more deaths are inevitable.

3.2 Aside from these stark figures this pandemic has affected everyone, significantly impacting the way people are able to live their lives on a daily basis and it will undoubtedly have a lasting impact. During this crisis there has been a tremendous response from public bodies, such as the National Health Service and Local Authorities with key workers ensuring critical services are able to keep people as safe as possible, save lives and keep essential services functioning. Volunteers and community organisations have mobilised to help support these efforts

4. Proposal and justification

4.1 In order to enable people to remember loved ones and the impact that Covid 19 crisis has had on their lives as well as to celebrate the contribution of key workers, volunteers and others it is proposed that four initiatives are progressed. Area Councils and Ward Alliances may also wish to progress initiatives specific to their locality.

a) Memorial Artwork

Due to the scale of the crisis and the extraordinary impact that it has had on local people it is fitting that Barnsley consider a memorial artwork for COVID 19 that will:

- Provide a focal point and a reminder of the pandemic
- Allow people to remember those who lost their lives from all causes
- Recognise the contribution and sacrifices made by key workers
- Involve local celebrated high profile artists in developing the project
- Meet the requirements of the Borough's Public Art Strategy and best practice

It is proposed that:

- A project team be established to progress the memorial artwork project
- A steering group and panel be established to select artists and the final artwork and that local high profile artists Ian Mc Millan and Graham Ibbeson are involved in this process
- Ian McMillan, who is currently serving as "Poet in Lockdown" be asked to create suitable wording to be incorporated into the artwork and to be include in the artists' brief to act as an inspiration.
- Local People, local institutions and key workers are engaged in the process
- The artwork is located in a suitable location within the new Town Centre development in order to give it the necessary status and profile. As the glassworks development is currently underway detailed technical assessments will need to be undertaken to identify a suitable site and timelines for the delivery of both projects will need to be aligned
- Support for the project is sought from local experts at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in order to provide technical and curatorial expertise, access to high profile artists and support with the long term evolution of the artwork and support with signposting and raising awareness of the artwork and Barnsley's overall offer
- The project is designed so that it supports the local economy by providing long term signposting to Barnsley Town Centre and its cultural offer, so that this work effectively contributes to the long term recovery of the Borough

- External funding opportunities for the artwork are explored, including from partner contributions

b) Mayor's Special Award Medals

It is proposed that a scheme is developed to recognise people from Barnsley who have made extraordinary contributions during the Covid 19 crisis and that Mayor's Special Awards Medals are introduced for this purpose

c) Freedoms of the Borough

The Freedoms of the Borough Scheme is due to be reviewed in 2021 providing an opportunity to recognise people who have given outstanding service during this crisis, it is therefore proposed that this recognition be built into the review

d) Book of Condolence

It is traditional for a book of condolence to be left in the Town Hall for people to sign at times of significant loss. However this method is not practical during the current pandemic as it would introduce considerable risk of cross contamination and infection. It is therefore proposed that a virtual book of condolence be established for people to remember loved ones who have been lost from all causes. The digital book will be available on line and for the general public to browse the entries made. It will remain open for contributions until the pandemic is over and subsequently be incorporated in to the Digital Archives and can be printed and bound in the traditional way if so desired.

The virtual book has significant advantages as it can be accessed remotely and safely during the pandemic; people will readily be able to include images as well as messages of condolence and due to its digital nature it will be more accessible to a greater number of people to view, for example where friends and relatives are living at a distance or are being shielded.

Consideration should be given to supporting the elderly and digitally excluded to remember loved ones in this way and an element of moderation should be included to prevent misuse.

5. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 5.1 If these initiatives are not progressed the Council would fail to recognise the significance of Covid 19 and the impact it has had on local people. It is possible to progress some of the initiatives as opposed to all of them.

6. Implications for local people / service users

- 6.1 Local people will benefit from these initiatives as they are designed to recognise the impact of Covid 19 on our residents and to celebrate the contributions made. People will be able to interact with the book of condolence and will be engaged in the development of the artwork

6.2 The artwork will contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors to the town and raising awareness of the Town centre's regeneration and the Borough's cultural offer.

7. Financial implications

7.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer) , this report seeks endorsement of the concept of these initiatives and at this stage, costs are still to be finalised. Every effort will be made to seek external funds to contribute to the proposed projects

8. Employee implications

8.1 none

9. Communications implications

9.1 Communications will be made to raise awareness of the proposals

10. Consultations

10.1 Consultations have taken place with:
Head of Communications
Head of Economic Development
Yorkshire Sculpture Park
Arts Council England
Local Artists Ian McMillan and Graham Ibbeson
Henry Boot

11. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

11.1 The proposal will support the Council's key priority of a Strong and Vibrant Economy in particular to the objectives to develop a vibrant town centre and strengthen our visitor economy.

11.2 It also recognises People Achieving their Potential though recognising and valuing their contribution during this extraordinary time

11.3 The proposals will contribute to building Strong and Resilient Communities by providing a permanent focal point to remember the crisis and allow people to look forward and move on as we enter the recovery phase.

12. Tackling health inequalities

12.1 Evidence is emerging that certain groups of people are more likely to be adversely affected by Covid 19 .These proposals recognise and give voice to people who have been impacted, including those who have lost loved ones during this crisis from all causes. It also provides an opportunity to celebrate the lives of those who have been lost and the efforts of key workers and others who have contributed significantly during the crisis.

13. Climate Change & Sustainable Energy Act 2006

13.1 no impact.

14. Risk management issues

14.1 There are technical risks that need to be managed in the development of the memorial artwork

14.2 There are reputational risks if the Council fails to acknowledge and recognise the impact of Covid 19 and the sacrifices and contribution made by key workers and local people

15. Health, safety, and emergency resilience issues

N/A

16. Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights

N/A

17. Promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion

17.1 People with additional needs, or digitally excluded will need to be supported to engage with the projects

17.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project will be produced as necessary

18. Reduction of crime and disorder

18.2 A key feature of the project is to build civic pride

19. Conservation of biodiversity

N/A

20. List of appendices

22. Background papers

None

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