

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Title: **MEMORIAL TO COMMEMORATE ARMED FORCES CASUALTIES IN CONFLICTS SINCE 1945**

Date: 8 December 2009

Member Reporting: Councillors Holness and Councillor Stretton – Mover and Secunder of the motion to Council.

Contact Officer(s): Ian Hunt – Democratic Services Manager: 01628 796128

Wards affected: All

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 There are currently many war memorials within the Royal Borough but only a few that specifically relate to post World War Two. At its meeting held on 22 September 2009, Council passed a motion that conflicts and casualties since 1945 deserve to be equally remembered and asked for a report to be presented giving the options possible to address this.

2. **RECOMMENDATION: That the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with Councillors Holness and Stretton, be authorised to draw up a detailed proposal for consideration by Council at a future meeting.**

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?
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The community as a whole and in particular the relatives and loved ones of those that gave their lives in the service of the country since the Second World War would then have a focal point to remember their sacrifice alongside those already recorded.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 At the end of World War I virtually every town and village erected a war memorial in recognition of the supreme effort and loss that the Country had endured during the previous 4 years. Many war memorials bear plaques listing the names of those that died. At the end of the Second World War, additional names were added to the existing memorials and additional memorials were erected to honour those that had given their lives in that War.
- 3.1.2 Whilst the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire does now maintain and display the record of every fatality since the Second World War, this is remote from our community and its annual Remembrance Day honouring their sacrifice.

- 3.1.3 War memorials take a wide variety of forms. Any object can be considered a war memorial, as long as the inscription and/or purpose behind the creation or erection of the object links it to the remembrance of a war or conflict. Most war memorials consist of an inscribed freestanding or wall-mounted commemorative structure made of stone, metal or wood bearing plaques listing the names of those that died. However, wartime casualties have also been commemorated in many other ways such as by books, windows, lychgates, gardens and complete buildings such as community halls, hospitals, chapels and bridges. There are many such memorials situated around the Royal Borough, ranging from memorial crosses, buildings or other structures to plaques in churches or on other buildings.
- 3.1.4 At various war memorials throughout the Borough services are held and wreaths are laid each year on Armistice day and Remembrance Sunday in memory of those who gave their lives in the two World Wars and the many other conflicts in which the country has been involved.

Options

Add names to current war memorials.

- 3.1.5 Subject to the wishes of their families, the names of Borough residents killed in action since 1945 could be added to existing war memorials that are located throughout the Borough. It would not be possible to retrospectively add the names of all the servicemen that have lost their lives since 1945 as unfortunately there is no comprehensive or reliable information based on location in respect of those who have died. However, the Council could run a publicity campaign inviting relatives of those that have lost their lives in the many conflicts since the end of the Second World War to submit a request that their names be added to the appropriate war memorial.
- 3.1.6 A process would have to be put in place to consider and approve any requests received. It is recommended that any additions are advertised and representations considered before a final decision is made as additions to existing war memorials can be controversial. Members may recall that the name of Royal Marine Ben Reddy, who died in Afghanistan in March 2007, was added to the war memorial in Ascot last year.
- 3.1.7 As many of the memorials in the Borough are not owned or maintained by the Council the responsibility would rest with the custodian of that memorial to update the memorial as appropriate. This could be contentious as there would be a cost implication for the custodian. However, the Council could use the powers available to it to ensure that any necessary works are carried out.

Establish a new Memorial.

- 3.1.8 A new Memorial could be erected at an appropriate location within the Borough. As indicated above, this memorial could take a variety of forms, such as a free standing stone/metal structure, a tree, a memorial garden etc. The cost of the memorial would obviously depend on the type and scale of memorial agreed. For example a simple stone tablet could be erected adjacent to the existing memorial at the Town Hall.

- 3.1.9 The inscription on the memorial could be generic and not name the conflicts that the Country has been involved in since 1945 as that would prevent the need to add to it in the future. It would also address the problem of trying to identify the names that could be added to the memorial.

Commemorative Book/Roll of Honour

- 3.1.10 A commemorative Book or Roll of Honour could be set up and be available for display at the Town Hall/Guildhall to which the names of people could be added. This could be put on display adjacent to the existing memorials at each Remembrance Day Civic Service in both Maidenhead and Windsor.

4. Responsibility for the upkeep of War Memorials

- 4.1.1 Whilst many memorials are maintained either by local authorities, parish councils, Royal British Legion branches and other organisations, often no one person or body is legally responsible for their upkeep. When most memorials were erected, after the First World War, this problem was rarely considered and resources tended to be directed into fund-raising and construction rather than any provision for long term upkeep.
- 4.1.2 The War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923 permitted local authorities to incur reasonable expenditure in the maintenance, repair and protection of any war memorial within their district whether vested in them or not, but there was no obligation to do this.
- 4.1.3 In the light of recent press coverage that highlighted cases of damage to war memorials, the Ministry of Justice and Department of Communities and Local Government have issued a joint statement stressing the importance of ensuring that war memorials are maintained to a good standard and reminding local authorities, which also includes Parish Councils, of their long standing powers available to them for this purpose. There would therefore be an expectation upon the Council to fund any necessary repairs or maintenance works to preserve war memorials within the authority area where the ownership or responsibility for that memorial is unclear or where the custodian of that memorial fails to maintain it.

Background papers:

None