

Portfolio Holder Decision

Report Title: Council Policy on New Civic Memorials

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jill Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services

Senior Officer: Catherine Parkinson, Interim Director of Governance and Compliance Services

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report discusses ways in which the Council should respond to requests to construct new memorials on Council owned land.
- 1.2. A draft policy is attached as Appendix I and a consultation strategy as Appendix II.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Council consult on the draft policy outlined in Appendix I, with a view to a policy being adopted once feedback has been evaluated.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. At present there is no Council policy or guidance relating to how requests for new memorials should be responded to.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. No other options were considered.

5. Background

- 5.1. The majority of civic memorials across Cheshire East relate to the two World Wars and were constructed in the early 1920s in response to the loss of life during the First World War. A small number of memorials have been constructed over recent years across the Borough; examples would include a memorial at Bridgemere commemorating the loss of a RAF crew who died there in 1944, a memorial to six Royal Engineers killed near Alvaston Hall in 1940 and a (First) Gulf War memorial in Queen's Park Crewe.

- 5.2. A common theme to the majority of the memorials that can be found across Cheshire East is that they commemorate loss of life during a war or conflict, whilst in the service of the country and at the request of the Government at the time. Whilst this should not necessarily be seen as the only relevant criteria for granting approval for a new memorial to be constructed it would appear to provide a suitable benchmark against which applications could be evaluated.
- 5.3. Other criteria which would appear to be relevant in coming to a view as to whether a new memorial should be constructed would be:
- Exactly where the proposed memorial is to be installed. It would appear reasonable to treat requests for memorials that would be in close proximity to existing war memorials differently to requests for memorials in other locations, with a presumption against approval unless strong reasons were developed as to why a memorial should be allowed.
 - What links do the individual / group being memorialised have to the locality / Cheshire East?
 - What is the design / size / construction material of the proposed memorial? Would it be in sympathy with its immediate environment?
 - What wording will be included on the memorial? Would the wording or any symbols on the memorial cause offence?
 - Can the information that will be contained on the memorial be independently verified for accuracy?
 - Who will be responsible for installation and ensuring the long term safety of the memorial?
 - Who will be responsible for long term maintenance and repair?
 - Will the public be able to view the memorial and read any inscriptions safely?
 - Would the memorial help demonstrate the Council's long term commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant?
- 5.4. A view will need to be taken as to the types of organisations or individuals where it could be inappropriate to allow a memorial to be constructed; these could include:
- Individuals / organisations where the actions that it is proposed to memorialise were overtly political.
 - Individuals / organisations where a significant number of people could be offended by a memorial being constructed
- 5.5 The issues highlighted in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 have been included in a draft policy attached as Appendix I.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

6.1.1. There are no legal implications.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. There are no finance implications.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. There is currently no Council policy in this area.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. There are no equality implications.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. There are no HR implications.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. There are no risk management implications.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. There are no direct implications for climate change.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. The policy would apply to all of Cheshire East.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. It is recommended that a consultation exercise is undertaken, a consultation strategy outlined in Appendix II.

9. Access to Information

9.1. There is no background information.

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Martin Smith

Job Title: Registration and Civic Services Manager

Email: martin.r.smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix I

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

Council policy on new civic memorials

This policy outlines the approach that the Council will take when it receives a request for a memorial to be erected on land owned or controlled by the Council. This policy does not consider any planning or highways issues, and those wishing consideration to be given to the erection of a memorial may find it useful to consult with the Council's Planning and / or Highways Service first. This policy does not relate to requests for funding. The policy does not cover memorials to individuals / families in graveyards or cemeteries.

The majority of existing memorials in town centres and other public spaces recognise the sacrifice made by local people fighting for their country during two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. Whilst recognising that there will be other events that are worthy of being marked by a memorial, the Council would wish to avoid a proliferation of new memorials. The test that will be applied will be that any new memorial should commemorate sacrifice, endeavour or an event that is comparable to that remembered on existing war memorials.

Any request for the Council to grant permission for the erection of a memorial must include:

- An outline of what link those being memorialised have with Cheshire East.
- A plan of the proposed memorial showing dimensions and its proposed location in relation to nearby buildings, roads, and if relevant other memorials.
- Details of the construction materials.
- Details of the method of construction.
- The precise wording that will appear on the memorial, together with pictures of any images that will appear on the memorial.
- Independent verification as to the accuracy of the information that will be contained on the memorial.
- An indication of who will fund the installation and who will take long term responsibility for the care and maintenance of the memorial ?

The Council will be very unlikely to approve a memorial if:

- It would be in close proximity to an existing war memorial, in such cases those proposing to erect the memorial would need to demonstrate a clear argument as to why an additional memorial should be permitted.
- The memorial would recognise political or other potentially socially contentious activity.
- The erection of a memorial or the proposed wording on the memorial could cause offence.
- The public would not be able to safely access the memorial to read inscriptions.

A final decision on whether permission will be granted for a memorial to be erected on land owned or controlled by the Council will be made by the Leader of the Council after consultation with Cabinet colleagues and Officers.

Appendix II

DRAFT CONSULTATION STRATEGY

There are a range of organisations who are likely to have views on such a policy; these include:

- Individual Cheshire East Branches of the Royal British Legion
- The County Office of the Royal British Legion
- Other ex servicemen / women's organisations operating within the Borough who have in the past had an involvement in the creation, restoration or interpretation of memorials; including:
 - Royal Engineers Association
 - Royal Naval Association
 - Cheshire Regiment Association
- The Cheshire County Memorial Project
- Town Councils
- Parish Councils
- Historic England

Copies of the draft policy, together with a short explanatory note will be sent to the above organisations.

The draft policy will be placed on the consultation page of the Cheshire east website.

Comments on the policy should be received by [four weeks].