

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 5 September 2011

**Report of: Brian Reed, Democratic Services and Registration
Manager**

Subject: Royal Engineers Memorial

Portfolio Holder: Wesley Fitzgerald, Leader of the Council

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 At Full Council on 21 April 2011, a Notice of Motion was submitted by Councillors C Thorley and D Flude to investigate the possibility of erecting a small memorial, in the Crewe area, in recognition of the bravery of the Royal Engineers who were killed by one of the four bombs, which fell in a field opposite Alvaston Hall, near Crewe, in August 1940.
- 1.2 Section 10 of this report outlines the options that are open to the Council should it wish to install a memorial in the Crewe area.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of this report and should it wish to proceed with the erection of small memorial select one of the options outlined in Section 10 below.
- 2.2 If it is agreed that a plaque or other small memorial should be placed near the site of the tragedy and the favoured location is on private land, authority is sought for the Borough Solicitor to enter into such agreements as are necessary to give effect to the Cabinet's wishes and agree the terms of such agreements.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 That this matter has been formally submitted for consideration through Full Council.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Nantwich North and West.
Wistaston

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Councillors Mrs Penny Butterill, Arthur Moran, Mrs Margaret Simon and Mrs Jacqueline Weatherill.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 There are no wider policy implications.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 There are no significant financial implications. The cost of a modest plaque or memorial (probably less than £500) could be met from existing budgets.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 empowers it to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion of the social well-being of the area.
- 8.2 There are no other obvious significant legal implications, other than ensuring that any plaque or memorial is located in a position has been approved by the relevant landowner and that there are no planning or highway issues with the location or design of the memorial. The details of such issues cannot be resolved until a decision in principle is taken as to whether to erect a plaque or small memorial.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 There are no risk management implications.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 In August 1940, four bombs fell in a field opposite Alvaston Hall, near Crewe. They did not explode immediately and an Army Bomb Disposal Unit was called out. One of the bombs then exploded, killing six members of the Royal Engineers Unit, Sergeant Edward Greengrass,

Sapper Harold Thompson, Sapper Michael Lambert, Sapper Albert Edward Fearon, Sapper George Lucas and Sapper John Percival. Due to issues of security and morale the incident was not reported in the press at the time and the names of the men are not recorded on any war memorial in Crewe or Nantwich.

- 10.2 The Notice of Motion submitted to Council was prompted by an approach received by Councillors Thorley and Flude from the Crewe Branch of the Royal Engineers Association.
- 10.3 Should the Council wish to proceed and mark the loss of the six Royal Engineers there are a number of options which could be pursued; these include:
- Placing a plaque or other small memorial as close to the site of the tragedy as possible. Such an action would be consistent with the way in which other wartime tragedies have been marked both elsewhere in Cheshire East and in also in other parts of the country. An example in Cheshire East would include the memorial installed at Bridgemere in 2003, in honour of a crew of seven American airmen who crashed during the Second World War. It is understood that this is the approach favoured by the Royal Engineers Association and by Councillors Thornley and Flude.
 - Adding the names of the six Royal Engineers to an existing war memorial in the area; such an approach would require the permission of the custodians of the appropriate memorial. Were such an approach to be adopted it could prove difficult to add contextual information about the incident as on such memorials it is customary simply to list names, rank and sometimes regiments or other service specific information of those that are remembered.
 - Placing a plaque or other small memorial, elsewhere in the Crewe area, such as the Municipal Square in Crewe town centre or within the Municipal Buildings or other Council property.
- 10.4. Research is currently ongoing to identify the exact location of the incident in 1940 as there are conflicting accounts of the location. A respected local historian is being consulted and the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies Service are searching their records to see if they can be of assistance. The lack of contemporary press coverage referred to above had contributed to the uncertainty of the exact location and is the reason why two Wards are detailed in section 4 above.
- 10.5 Should Cabinet agree to the principle of placing a plaque or other small memorial close to the site of the tragedy work will be undertaken to quickly to identify an appropriate location. If this is on private land the approval of the landowner will be sought and appropriate permissions

obtained. Alternatively if an appropriate location can be found on Council owned land approval will be sought from the relevant Service / portfolio holder. The Planning and Highways Services will be consulted to ensure that any memorial satisfies relevant planning laws and its location causes no problem on the highway.

- 10.6 If it is the view of Cabinet that it is more appropriate for details to be added to an existing memorial, approaches will be made to find a suitable location in the Crewe area. Similarly, should Cabinet wish a memorial to be located elsewhere in the Crewe area a suitable location will be researched.
- 10.7 Should approval be given for the erection of a plaque or small memorial it is suggested that it is unveiled by the Mayor, with the Royal Engineers Association and representatives of the Army playing a role in a suitable ceremony.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Martin Smith

Designation: Manager, Executive Office

Tel No: 01270 686012

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