

**Commemorative Plaques Scheme**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Councillor Pickett, Chairman of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

To consider introducing a Commemorative Plaques Scheme, unique to Maidstone, as a means of celebrating local heritage and the historic environment.

**This report makes the following recommendations to the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee:**

1. That the introduction of the Commemorative Plaques Scheme be agreed.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	18 December 2017

# Commemorative Plaques Scheme

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There are a number of commemorative plaque schemes in place across the country. Most notable is London's 'Blue Plaque' Scheme, administered by English Heritage. It is seen as a prestigious accolade, which is part of the scheme's success.
- 1.2 Plaques are an effective and visible means of celebrating local heritage and the historic environment. They tangibly connect the past and present, increasing pride among local communities and giving a sense of place to residents and visitors.
- 1.3 Plaques can also play an important conservation role, helping to highlight buildings with historic associations and support their preservation.
- 1.4 Maidstone already has a number of plaques and monuments of historical and cultural significance (see figure 1).



Figure 1

- 1.5 Past and current members of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee are advocates of implementing a local scheme in Maidstone.
- 1.6 Members of the Committee are also keen to ensure that there is a mechanism for larger scale memorials to be considered along with proposals for names to be added on the roll of honour in the Town Hall chamber.
- 1.7 Research into schemes across the country has been undertaken and consideration given to English Heritage's guidance.
- 1.8 The draft guidance for Maidstone's Commemorative Plaque Scheme and application form (Appendix A) have been designed around the criteria set out by English Heritage and best practice.
- 1.9 The guidance and application form takes into consideration the following findings:
  - Local commemorative plaque schemes should have a sense of distinctiveness and unity. This will help ensure that appropriate levels of funding are sought.
  - The scheme must be funded by the person or group proposing the plaque.
  - Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to fulfil as part of the process.

- Part of the success of the scheme is a well-publicised unveiling ceremony – which is something the council can assist with.
- 1.10 The alternative to a local commemorative plaque scheme is to allow plaques to be placed in and around the borough without the council's input.
- 1.11 In June 2017 a 'blue plaque' was unveiled in the Royal Star arcade, one of three commemorations to David Bowie as part of BBC Music Day. An organisation called the British Plaque Trust, also known as 'Open Plaques', was responsible for this.
- 1.12 The unveiling ceremony attracted a lot of positive publicity in the [local](#)<sup>i</sup> and [national](#)<sup>ii</sup> press. It served to raise the profile of Maidstone as well as the building, the Royal Star Arcade. The articles highlighted Bowie's historical association with the building which in turn served to emphasise the history of the building. It is now more widely known, for example, that the Royal Star Arcade was once known as the Star Hotel. This 16<sup>th</sup> Century hotel was given the royal seal of approval and the royal prefix following a visit from a young Queen Victoria in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It was also where Benjamin Disraeli made his parliamentary acceptance speech after being elected MP for Maidstone.
- 1.13 There are a number of national schemes already in place that interested parties could link into. Blue plaques, although synonymous with London, are seen across the county and can be used to create local memorials.
- 1.14 Open Plaques provides the necessary resources on its website to enable proposals to be taken forward. The Council could simply signpost residents, via the website, to this organisation rather than administrate its own scheme.
- 1.15 In this scenario, the Council would have no involvement other than through its statutory responsibilities which would involve matters including planning and listed building consent which is the extent of its current role and commitment but it would be enabling interested parties through its signposting of national websites.
- 1.16 However, successful, local schemes require a strong, individual identity. An assortment of memorials without unity can be detrimental to the architectural landscape and detract from, rather than enhance, individual commemorations.
- 1.17 The plaque installed as part of BBC Music Day illustrates the positive impact a Commemorative Plaque Scheme can have but it also demonstrates the need for continuity.
- 1.18 Current strategies do not include a commemorative plaque scheme; therefore there is no funding or resources allocation available to deliver one.
- 1.19 A local commemorative plaque 'protocol' could be achieved by the proposed scheme, detailed at Appendix A. It would have a minimal impact on resources and therefore would require no additional funding. Its impact

however, would be significant in terms of the council and primarily members of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee becoming public advocates of a scheme and an expected standard.

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## **2 AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee could decide to not progress a plaque scheme.
  - 2.2 The Committee could agree that sign posting interested parties to existing organisations like English Heritage and Open Plaques where they can find information and resources to commission a commemorative plaque, namely a blue style plaque, would be a sufficient.
  - 2.3 Implement a local Commemorative Plaque Scheme that is unique to Maidstone to celebrate and preserve Maidstone's history.
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## **3 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council adopts its own commemorative plaque scheme.
  - 3.2 Maidstone has a rich history and has a high profile as the historic County town of Kent. A Commemorative Plaque Scheme would help raise the cultural and historical profile of Maidstone and Kent locally and nationally. The proposed scheme could be administrated within existing resources and with the advocacy of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee could achieve successful outcomes.
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## **4 RISK**

- 4.1 There is currently no scheme or guidance in place for Commorative Plaques in Maidstone.
  - 4.2 Whilst the Commemorative Plaque installed as part of BBC Music Day illustrates the positive impact a Commemorative Plaque Scheme can have, it also demonstrates the need for continuity.
  - 4.3 Successful schemes have a strong, individual identity. The risk of not having a scheme in place is that an assortment of memorials could be installed. This could be detrimental to the architectural landscape and detract, rather than enhance, individual commemorations.
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## **5 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

- 5.1 This report has been brought forward with the backing of past and present members of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee who feel that local Councillors have an important role to play in preserving and celebrating Maidstone's many historical attributes.
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## 6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the preferred option is agreed, the Museums team will take the scheme forward on behalf of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, putting the appropriate processes in place with the Democratic Services team and the Digital team.
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## 7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Accepting the recommendations will improve the Council's ability to deliver on its priority to 'keep Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all' and fulfil its objective, set out in the Strategic Plan to respect the character and heritage of our Borough.	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	The proposed Commemorative Plaque Scheme will provide guidance on commemoration and will help ensure that Maidstone's future commemorations are an enhancement to the architectural and cultural landscape.	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Financial</b>	The recommended option will be met within existing resources but should committee consider administering the scheme in another way there will be funding implications	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Legal</b>	None identified. The applicant will have a legal duty to fulfil as stated in the application form and the Council will fulfil its statutory obligations	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	The processes implemented to deal with the administrative functions of this scheme will be compliant with privacy and data protection legislation. This will aid organisational compliance.	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
<b>Equalities</b>	The guidance and application form will be provided in alternative formats, on request. There is no detrimental impact identified.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No impact identified.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
<b>Procurement</b>	There is no requirement for procurement for any of the options proposed.	Dawn Hudd, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

## **8 REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Commemorative Plaques Scheme and Application form

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## **9 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Newspaper articles (links as below).

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/david-bowies-legacy-commemorated-with-127328/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/jun/15/david-bowie-three-blue-plaques-bbc-music-day>