

Commemorative Plaque Scheme Review

Final Decision-Maker	ERL
Lead Head of Service	Victoria Barlow
Lead Officer and Report Author	Victoria Barlow
Classification	Public
Wards affected	High Street Ward.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider minor procedural updates to the Commemorative Plaque Scheme.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the proposed updated procedure for administering the scheme be approved, to make roles and responsibilities clearer for applicants.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	19 October 2021

Commemorative Plaque Scheme Review

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council’s overall achievement of its aims as set out in section 3</p>	Museum Director
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendation(s) supports the achievement(s) of the Heritage is Respected cross cutting objectives by making significant elements of our built heritage more visible to members of the public.</p>	Museum Director
Risk Management	The Commemorative Plaque Scheme Policy lays out how risks are addressed.	Museum Director
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and

		Economic Development
Legal	No legal implications identified.	Senior Lawyer, Corporate Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will have no impact on Crime and Disorder.	Museum Director
Procurement	No procurement will be required as a result of these recommendations	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	No direct implications on biodiversity and climate change arise in this report.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Maidstone Commemorative Plaques scheme was introduced to commemorate people and events which have contributed to the rich cultural heritage of the borough. In the past, a number of plaques and other memorials to culturally significant people and events have been raised, including a statue to Queen Victoria, plaques marking the home of Andrew Broughton (who was Clerk of the Court at the trial of Charles I), the Chapel where William Hazlitt's father preached and a memorial to the dead of the Battle of Maidstone (1648) in Brenchley Gardens.



A wide variety of styles and media were previously used.

2.2 In December 2017 members agreed the launch of an official MBC scheme with a standardised, preferred design to allow residents to easily pick out and recognise plaques which were part of the scheme. This report will examine the administration of the scheme and clarify several issues which have arisen for both officers and members of the public.

2.3 Design of Plaques

The Council's preferred plaque design is smooth Grey slate 18" [460mm] x 18" [460mm] x 1.25" [30mm]. Inscription to be "v" cut in the stone in Times Roman style and letters enamelled in light grey. Prominent features such as a named person or event should be gilded using 23crt gold letters. None of these new plaques has yet been approved and so no image exists.

NB: Although the term, Blue Plaque has become a common term of reference for plaques marking historic sites, the official scheme is run by English Heritage and is only awarded to sites within Greater London.

2.4 Eligibility

2.4.1 In order for a plaque to be approved for an individual:

- They must have died at least 10 years previously
- They must be sufficiently famous that they are recognisable to the succeeding generation or sufficiently significant in their field
- Their achievements should be lasting and significant
- The building to which the plaque will be attached must have a direct link to the individual and they must have lived or worked there for at least 5 years

2.4.2 For one to be approved to commemorate an event:

- The event must have happened at least 25 years ago
- The event should be recognisable to many of the general public
- The event must have been of special historical interest or significant in the history of Maidstone or Britain
- The building to which the plaque will be attached must have a direct link to the event

2.4.3 Under the scheme, plaques must also be visible to the public and subject to the agreement of the building owner.

2.4.4 It is the applicant's responsibility to apply for Planning or Listed Building Consent, where these are appropriate.

2.5 Costs

Applicants for a plaque are made aware that no costs will be covered by Maidstone Borough Council and they should be prepared to budget for upwards of £700 for a completed project.

2.6 The Council's role

2.6.1 Maidstone Borough Council (in the person of the Museum Director) is responsible for co-ordinating the scheme, considering applications at ERL committee, and helping to promote the plaque by covering unveilings and featuring plaques on the council website. It should be noted that there is a maximum capacity for one person to assess 3 applications a year and this may affect what steps are taken to promote applications.

2.6.2 Applicants should provide as much information as possible in their application to allow a decision to be made. However, in order to protect the Council from reputational damage, some research will be carried out by staff in order to ensure that the individual to be marked is largely known for the actions being commemorated. (For example, a bid to mark the house of a person described as 'a great philanthropist' is unlikely to be accepted if they were better known for criminal activity, although the criminal activity may be worthwhile marking)

2.6.3 Applicants should allow six months from application to decision. This allows for applications to be programmed into an appropriate committee meeting after the research above has been carried out. In contrast, it should be noted that applicants seeking permission to raise an English Heritage Blue Plaque are advised their application may take up to three years to reach a conclusion.

2.7 Beyond approval

Once an application has been approved, it is the responsibility of the applicant to procure all the appropriate permissions, consents and the plaque itself. The applicant is also responsible for fixing the plaque in place securely and safely. All maintenance and replacement of damaged plaques is also the responsibility of the applicant in perpetuity.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Members accept the report which lays out more specifically (in paragraph 2.6) the responsibilities of the scheme administrator and the procedural timescales for applicants

3.2 Members may reject the report with the proposed clarifications

3.3 Members may suggest additional or alternative elements

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is preferred that members accept the report which clarifies several points of the process, making it manageable by officers and clearer to applicants
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5. RISK

The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

The report introduces minor refinements to the scheme agreed in 2017 by ERL.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Applicant guidance will be updated on approval of the report by Members

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A – Commemorative Plaques Scheme

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The public version of applicant guidance can be found at
https://maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0011/178553/AGREED-Commemorative-Plaque-Guide.docx