

Report to: Events and Town Centre
Management Committee



Report Ref: E1908
Meeting Date: 30th September 2019
Agenda Item: 8
Prepared By: Town Clerk

Subject: VE Day Commemorations 2020

1.0 BACKGROUND

On 8th May 2020, the country will commemorate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, the date when the allied forces announced the surrender of Germany. In 1945, the day was widely celebrated across the UK with street parties, dancing and singing and the Board of Trade announced one could buy red, white and blue bunting without using ration coupons! ¹ In 2020 VE day falls on a Friday and the early May bank holiday has been moved to the date celebrate the anniversary.

At the July committee meeting it was resolved that officers review the ideas generated for the World War I centenary commemorations and report to this meeting with proposals, including to consider a project to record the memories of residents who lived during World War II.

2.0 REVIEW OF WWI COMMEMORATION IDEAS

The focus council's commemoration of the centenary of the end of World War I were as follows; the events took place in October and November:

- a) Ensuring Remembrance Sunday was extra special
- b) Keeping the bunting up until Remembrance Sunday
- c) Silent Soldiers attending the town centre for the November Makers Market
- d) An exhibition from the Cheshire Villages Great War Society
- e) Renewing the WWI soldiers window stickers
- f) Producing a Remembrance Discovery trail
- g) Installation of a blue plaque at Heathfield Square

The council also had the following ideas which did not progress: obtaining funding for a coordinator to develop a history of life in Knutsford during the war and creating an educational pack for schools, installing a beacon on the Barncroft and lighting it as part of the Battle's Over tribute, a public display of the number of men from Knutsford who went to service during the war, working with local producers to produce commemorative products, installing a temporary trench in the town centre.

Knutsford Heritage Centre hosted an exhibition which connected with the era and the Curzon screened Peter Jackson's *They Shall not Grow Old* documentary.

¹ <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-you-need-to-know-about-ve-day>

It is considered too soon to look to repeat many of these initiatives and that the commemoration of the centenary of WWI were a more sombre affair whilst the focus of VE Day is more celebratory.

3.0 PROPOSED EVENTS FOR VE DAY 2020

3.1 STREET PARTY ON THE MOOR

In 1945, VE day was a national holiday which was celebrated with street parties. It is proposed that the council organise a town street party to be held on the Moor. This would provide a central community venue for the town to come together and enjoy a day of celebrations whilst also providing a time for reflection. Hosting the event on the Moor would mean no road closures are required.

A street party on the Moor could be delivered with a small stage for some live music, tables and benches for residents to bring their own picnics, traditional games and entertainment such as Punch and Judy, and stalls such as a coconut shy which could be manned by and raise funds for local charities.

The event would aim to be an informal gathering for the community. The council could look to work with the Heritage Centre to host a temporary World War II themed exhibition within a marquee, to bring an element of reflection, commemoration and to trigger discussion.

The council could work with local residential homes and the community transport association to enable their residents to attend on the day.

A budget of £2,500 is recommended to cover the promotion and events costs.

3.2 REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

A short service of remembrance could take place at the Centennial War Memorial. This could be similar to those organised for the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the 80th anniversary of the start of the war.

3.3 LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Funding could be applied for from the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a project recording the memories of those who lived in Knutsford during the war.

This could be a video project to create a lasting documentary style video using interviews, archive footage and local historians filling gaps which aren't recorded by memories. The council could look to launch the video at a special screening in the Curzon and make it available online. The longer interview footage could also be hosted online either on a dedicated website or within the Town Council website, becoming an education resource for schools and the wider community.

Alternatively, if funding is not achieved the council could look to deliver a similar project using audio recordings. These could similarly be hosted online but may have less impact and be less used than video.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider the proposed programme of events/commemorations for the 75th anniversary of VE day.