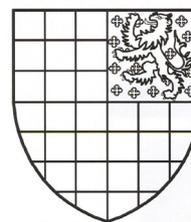


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Commemorations & events Committee**, held on **Tuesday 8th September 2020** online via Zoom Meetings at **3:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs S Catlin; G Earl; Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew (*Chairman*); M Milner; J Vernon and K Wood, and (*not appointed to the Committee*) Cllr J Baah

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); F Garth (*Asst TC & Civic Officer*), L Zeyfert (*All Saints Centre Manager*)

Presenting: Mr Paul Myles (*iro Thomas Paine proposals*)

Commems2020/01 ELECTION of CHAIR: Cllr Dr Mayhew was elected as Chair of the Committee for the 2020/21 year.

Commems2020/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr O’Keeffe, who had a work commitment and Cllr Makepeace, who reported an urgent distraction.

Commems2020/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none

Commems2020/04 QUESTIONS: There were none

Commems2020/05 MINUTES

It was resolved that:

Commems2020/05.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2019 are received and signed as an accurate record.

Commems2020/06 REMIT of the COMMITTEE:

The remit of the committee was rehearsed:

- › Originally a Working Party set up in 2012 to address a number of imminent commemorations; this body had its mandate extended in response to the similar considerations arising through to 2019; when it was established as a standing committee to address the continuing volume of noteworthy commemorations foreseeable in the next few years.
- › The Commemorations & Events Committee is mandated to consider significant anniversaries/centenaries or similar occasions, and such notable events as may be presented, and to formulate recommendations for Council as to the appropriate recognition of them.

Commems2020/07 BLACK HISTORY MONTH:

The meeting welcomed Cllr Baah, who had proposed the recognition of Black History Month (BHM). It had recently been agreed that the Council will organise an activity annually, in October, to acknowledge BHM and celebrate the central role Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) have played in transforming the social, political and economic spheres in the United Kingdom.

Members were reminded that October is set aside as “Black History Month”. First launched in the 1980’s with the view of challenging racism and educating society about the hidden Black history that was not taught in schools, namely: recognition of black people who have excelled, overcome, and made history. It was stated that the national curriculum for schools still excludes Black histories throughout and omits the vast contributions Black people have made to the UK. As a result, young people who learn from the national curriculum are not given a full or accurate

version of British history, which limits their opportunities and futures in an increasingly diverse social landscape.

An event suitable for the activity would vary, depending on a particular year, but should have the potential to educate about the BAME group. It should be non-political and one that celebrates the varied, but rich, legacy of BAME while challenging the accepted narrative that limits the history of BAME people to slaves and colonial subjects.

An example of such an event for 2020 that had been suggested was a talk at the Depot by David Olusoga* (depending on his availability), on the lives and experiences of migrants to and from Britain; perhaps accompanied by African drumming and dancing. Video clips could be relevant for local schools.

Cllr Baah reported that Mr Olugosa's agent had responded with a price for an online 'appearance' that was considered too high for the Council. A personal approach was being made direct to Mr Olugosa by a mutual acquaintance, and this may be helpful, although, due to the short time available and the restrictions of the Covid emergency, Cllr Baah proposed that this might be better reserved for a future year, when a live appearance may be possible. She suggested that, for 2020, some publicity and the flying of a Black History Month flag may be adequate recognition and effort might best be directed toward 2021.

There followed a long debate around various possibilities as some members felt that 'something' should still be introduced this year. A range of suggestions were made and tested, and it was eventually agreed that a BHM resource pack and flag would be obtained, and Cllrs Baah and Vernon should liaise with The Civic Officer and Town Clerk to produce a proposal.

**David Olusoga OBE is an historian, writer, broadcaster, presenter and film maker. He is Professor of Public History at the University of Manchester and has presented historical documentaries on the BBC and contributed to The One Show and The Guardian.*

Commems2020/08 THOMAS PAINE DAY:

The meeting welcomed Cllr Milner, recently appointed to the Committee having proposed to Council the inauguration of an annual Thomas Paine day in Lewes, with events and parties held on the nearest Sunday to 8th June. Also welcome was Paul Myles – a local authority on Paine – who offered context to the suggestion and presented a version of an illustrated lecture he has given on Paine in Lewes.

2021 would be the 230th anniversary of Thomas Paine's famous book the Rights of Man. Paine lived in Lewes from 1768 to 1774. From 1772 to 1773, Paine joined excise officers asking Parliament for better pay and working conditions, publishing, in summer of 1772, The Case of the Officers of Excise - his first political work, spending the London winter distributing the 4,000 copies printed to the Parliament and others. His seminal book, The Rights Of Man, was one of the most widely read books of its time.

8th June is the date of Tom Paine's death and Council had agreed in-principle to co-organise a street party on Sunday 6th June 2021; asking the Commemorations Committee to test viability and develop a proposal (*Minutes FC2020/48.1 and 48.2 refer.*); working on the detail with Lewes societies, businesses and residents, and. Further: Lewes Thomas Paine day would be a permanent annual fixture in Lewes, with events and parties held on the nearest Sunday to 8th June.

There followed a debate in which several points were argued, and each element of the proposal tested. It was agreed that Cllr Milner should gather ideas from appropriate bodies and individuals and present final suggestions to a future meeting. Members thanked Mr Myles for his extremely informative presentation.

Commems2020/09 'VOTE 100' Booklet:

In 2018, the Council had supported a Reeves Archive exhibition on the centenary of woman's right to vote. To accompany the exhibition, a group of local women

developed a website to highlight the commemorative events and women's history in the town <http://www.vote100lewes.com/>. The group now intended to publish a booklet containing articles from the website to distribute to local schools and libraries - providing a tangible legacy from the suffrage events. It was said to be an appropriate time to do so, since this year is the centenary of the first woman becoming a Borough councillor in Lewes and also a hundred years since American women gained the vote. The draft booklet covered local women's history with a series of articles on '100 Lewes Women' past and present, and would include a write up of the event Girls for Change led by former Mayor, Janet Baah.

The Council was asked whether it would be willing to support the booklet and pay for printing costs. The group proposed to print 200 copies of a soft-cover booklet (88 pages) describing local women's history, the suffrage centenary events and the mayor's 'Girls for Change Day'. Quotes from printers had been obtained which compared favourably with similar projects by other history groups, and Council was asked for up to £1,400.

It was proposed to distribute around 30 complimentary copies of the booklet to local schools, libraries and contributors. The rest would sell at about £8-£9 to offset some of the costs of printing and potentially raise a modest sum for a local charity (unspecified).

Councillors considered this request, having been furnished with a copy of the draft booklet provided as a courtesy 'publisher's preview'. The matter was discussed at some length, and there was a general feeling that this was a very worthwhile idea and that such a book would serve as an appropriate legacy of the very well-regarded event at the Town Hall. There were, however, many concerns voiced regarding the content and the consensus was that they would prefer not to associate Council with the present form. This was felt to be a matter of editing; not a criticism of the concept, or obvious hard work that had gone into it so far.

Councillors were very engaged with this discussion; some of whom have academic, publishing, and local history backgrounds which they hoped set their comments in context as constructive criticism. These centred-upon a perceived inconsistent quality of content; and the use of Wikipedia as a primary source. This, it was felt, compromised the underlying quality of the book and its potential for use as an educational tool.

Salient examples were discussed of what was described as an 'idiosyncratic' choice of featured individuals. The high number of female footballers featured was described as disproportionate – it was commented that 'one should be enough'.

Consideration was given to making the group an offer for a much lower sum as a contribution towards comprehensively re-editing, but the amount Members would be prepared to recommend was recognized as inadequate. There was a shared view that the document would work as, perhaps, a website or 'print-on-demand' online item, but there was little confidence that it could be marketed as a printed book at the price indicated. There was also a comment that the beneficiary charity should be declared.

Committee members were generally in favour of the concept, and keen to indicate that if they could help with further development they would be pleased to do so.

It was agreed that these responses would be conveyed to the applicants.

Commems2020/10

There being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The meeting closed at 4:40pm

Signed.....

Date