

**AGENDA ITEM:**

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**10 JUNE 2008**

**REPORT OF  
HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC  
SERVICES**

**THE FORMALISATION OF A SUITABLE COMMEMORATION PROCEDURE**

**SUMMARY**

To present a draft process and criteria with which Stockton Council might consider commemorating the lives of significant individuals, based on their importance and their connection with, and contribution to, the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. that consideration be given to the suggested commemoration procedure detailed below and that Executive Scrutiny either endorses it or allocates the issue to a Select Committee for a time limited review.**

**Suggested Procedure**

- i) the nominator sets out in writing reasons why the individual deserves acknowledgement.**
- ii) the SBC museum service provides an objective written commentary taking into account the specified judgement criteria.**
- iii) a small cross party group periodically judge nominations, giving consideration to:**
  - Level of importance**
  - Relevance to Stockton-on-Tees**
  - the appropriate level of commemoration.**
- iv) relevant Council Officers implement those recommendations as resources and opportunities allow**

## DETAIL

1. A report was submitted to members advisory in March 2007 inviting Members to consider how the Council might commemorate the life of Brass Crosby; and to consider the formalisation of a suitable procedure for considering any similar proposals in the future.
2. The Panel recognised the need to have an appropriate procedure in place within the Council whereby any requests to commemorate individuals might be considered, and Democratic Services were requested to consult with the Council's Museum's Officer and prepare an appropriate draft criteria and procedure for consideration by the Panel.
3. Subsequently, a report detailing Democratic Service's findings together with a draft commemoration procedure was presented to the Members Advisory Panel in January 2008. Details of the draft procedure are provided below at paragraphs 5 to 13. Following consideration of the report the Members' Advisory Panel agreed that the draft scheme be forwarded to the Executive Scrutiny Committee requesting that it considers the matter and, if appropriate, allocates it to a Select Committee for a time limited review.
4. During discussion on this matter the Advisory Panel suggested that the scheme could be extended to include important community achievements/events. If it is decided that the scheme is extended the procedure would need to be amended accordingly.

### English Heritage Blue Plaque scheme criteria

5. Democratic services contacted other councils to determine whether a procedure existed elsewhere. In every case they were referred to the official blue plaque scheme run by English Heritage. Blue plaques are the blue ceramic discs visible on the facades of buildings throughout London and parts of the United Kingdom. It focuses on London and a few other locations – Liverpool and Merseyside, Birmingham, Portsmouth and Southampton.
6. A commemorative plaque scheme began in London in the nineteenth century (with the Society of Arts' commemoration of Lord Byron in 1867). The current Blue Plaque scheme has been managed by English Heritage since 1986, who operate clear criteria.
7. The most important rule is the 20 year rule. To be eligible for a plaque, the proposed person must have been dead for 20 years or have passed the centenary of their birth, whichever is earlier. Nominated figures should also meet one or more of the following:
  - Be considered eminent by a majority of members of their profession or calling

- Have made an important positive contribution to human welfare or happiness
  - Be recognisable to the well-informed passer-by or deserve national recognition
  - And, in the case of London plaques, they should have resided in London for a significant period, in time or importance, within their life and work.
8. If the figure is a foreigner or an overseas visitor they should have an international reputation or significant standing in their own country and their time in London should have been a significant period within their life or work.
- Additional points to note:
- Proposals will be considered for the commemoration of sites with special historical interest
  - Plaques will not be erected on the sites of former residences occupied by famous people
  - Only one plaque is allowed per person
  - A building will not be marked just because it figures in a work of fiction
9. A short biographical report of the figure is prepared by an English Heritage historian. The proposal is then considered by the Blue Plaques Panel. If the panel rejects the suggestion then the application will not be able to go any further.
10. Proposers must wait 10 years before their suggestion is considered again. If the Panel is unable to reach a decision, either further research is required by English Heritage historians or a suggested figure is put on hold for a few years to be reconsidered in the future.
11. The English Heritage Blue Plaque scheme criteria are very specific and demanding so very few nominees gain recognition. (c 10-15 each year). A suitable scheme for Stockton would need to be able to accommodate a range of individuals, including ones who would not meet the EH criteria but who we might want to acknowledge with a modest plaque or interpretive panel. Conversely, and within reason our scheme should be able to advocate a more elaborate form of commemoration than a ceramic plaque, for a very small number of individuals, subject to appropriate resources being available.
12. The criteria for commemoration should be similar to the Blue Plaque scheme, but give greater emphasis to their relevance to Stockton on Tees. It would probably be unreasonable to expect all nominees to be recognisable to the general public or be considered of international significance. However, objective judgement should take account of both the level of importance of the individual and /or their achievements, and their relevance to Stockton.

## Recommendation

**That consideration be given to the adoption of a formal procedure whereby any requests to commemorate individuals might be considered.**

**the outline process would be as follows:**

- **the nominator sets out in writing reasons why the individual deserves acknowledgement**
- **the SBC museum service provides an objective written commentary taking into account the specified judgement criteria**
- **a small cross party group periodically considers the submissions and makes recommendations**
- **relevant Council Officers implement those recommendations as resources and opportunities allow**

Determining significance

13. A matrix score is determined by which an individual's significance should be judged using 2 criteria:-
  1. Level of importance - The impact level of them or their achievements, and their consequent notoriety, being judged local, regional, national, or international.
  2. Relevance to Stockton-on-Tees – What is their connection to Stockton?
    - a) Born or died here only; lived here a short while, or tenuous association with the place
    - b) Not born here, did not live here, but the work/event for which they are known took place here
    - c) Born and/or lived here but the work for which they are known took place elsewhere
    - d) Born and/or lived here and the work for which they are known took place here
14. The above categories are suggested in order of importance with a) scoring the lowest and d) justifying the greatest commemoration.

## Recommendation

**That a small cross party group be established to periodically judge nominations, giving consideration to:**

- i) Level of importance**
- ii) Relevance to Stockton-on-Tees**
- iii) the appropriate level of commemoration.**

15. The range of commemorative options might extend from a small label or interpretive panel, to a statue or portrait of the individual in a prominent or relevant location. However, the resulting list of recommendations would only be subject to the availability of funds, including those from external sources and from the general public by subscription.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

16. Unknown at this stage. It may be appropriate to consider developing a standard model plaque for Stockton-on-Tees, to both promote the Borough's Heritage and ensure the corporate nature and uniformity of such commemoration. Costs could be estimated at this stage.

## **COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

17. The proposals under consideration are aimed at having procedures to formally recognise the work or lives of individuals within the Borough that have brought great distinction to the area.

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD COUNCILLORS**

18. The matter has been raised and discussed with the Mayor of Stockton on Tees; and is brought to this Panel for consideration.

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