

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Strategic Lead - Regulatory****Meeting of the Cultural Committee: 23 November 2020**

Subject: Town Twinning and 80th Anniversary of Clydebank Blitz - Update

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To provide the Committee with an update on progress being made in relation to the visit to Letterkenny and preparations for 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- (a) note that the planned visit to meet with the Mayor of Letterkenny is now unlikely to take place this financial year;
- (b) note that the Clydebank Property Company had given permission for a memorial to commemorate the 80th Anniversary to be located in Solidarity Plaza and that the contract had been awarded to Alex MacIntyre Memorials Ltd;
- (c) note the verbal update given in respect of the meeting with Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) on 20 November 2020;
- (d) authorise the Convener to explore the possibility of involving some well known Scottish actors to participate in the event and report back to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- (e) agree that a meeting of the Blitz Working Group be held to consider the contingency plans and report back to the next meeting of the Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1** At its meeting on 5 October 2020, the Cultural Committee noted that the proposed visit by Members of the Committee to meet with the Mayor of Letterkenny to discuss the Friendship Agreement had been postponed. The Manager of Democratic and Registration Services has since been in communication with the Mayor's office and has confirmed that he is still keen to meet with the Committee in Letterkenny once it is safe to do so.
- 3.2** The Committee also noted that the Manager of Democratic and Registration Services had requested the RSNO to provide him with details of their proposals for the proposed concerts in the Town Hall and local churches on Sunday 14 March 2021 and was awaiting their response.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The Manager of Democratic and Registration Services has maintained contact with officials from Donegal County Council and will reschedule a visit to Letterkenny as soon as it is deemed safe to do so by both parties. However, it should be noted that it is now very unlikely that the visit will take place this financial year.
- 4.2** The RSNO has now been in contact with the Manager of Democratic and Registration Services and a video-conference meeting will be held with the RSNO, Bailie Agnew, Convener and the Manager of Democratic and Registration Services on 20 November 2020. Accordingly, the Committee will receive a verbal update on the outcome of that meeting.
- 4.3** It has been suggested that the proposed concerts in the Town Hall and local churches on Sunday 14 March 2021 should be hosted by some well known Scottish actors who could also participate by reading a poem, etc. The Committee is therefore asked to authorise the Convener to explore this possibility and report back to a future meeting with a proposal.
- 4.4** At the meeting of the Blitz Working Group on 21 August 2020, it was agreed to recommend to the Committee that that a large commemorative granite plaque be located in Solidarity Plaza to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz. This was approved by the Committee on 5 October subject to consent being given by the Clydebank Property Company. The Clydebank Property Company has now given consent for the memorial to be located on Solidarity Plaza as requested. Quotations were sought from three monumental sculptors and the contract was awarded to Alex MacIntyre Memorials Ltd. The memorial will cost £11,750 to make and install.
- 4.5** Since the last meeting of the Committee, the Scottish Government has published Scotland's Strategic Framework for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The framework identified five levels of restrictions which could be placed upon local authority areas depending on the infection rates and other factors such as pressure on hospital beds. West Dunbartonshire will be at level 4 on the date of the Committee, the highest level of restriction. The framework guidance on events can be summarised as follows:

Level 0 – Outdoor events permitted. Indoor events must be seated and numbers limited (no standing allowed).

Level 1 – Outdoor Events must be seated in an open space and numbers limited. Small seated indoor events permitted.

Levels 2 to 4 – Events are not permitted. No hospitality in level 4. Essential travel only between areas of different levels.

- 4.6** This means that under the current level of restrictions no event can take place in West Dunbartonshire. If this is still the case in February/March 2021 then the Committee may need to consider whether the event should be postponed to a later date.
- 4.7** Levels 0 to 1 would allow for a very limited event to take place both indoors and outdoors. For example, the unveiling of the memorial plaque at Solidarity Plaza could be held outdoors and the area could be covered with a marquee to reduce the impact of bad weather. The presentation of medals could be held outside or inside but with a very limited number attending. If Hall Street was closed to traffic then a marquee could be placed over the road allowing for a larger number of guests to meet at that location.
- 4.8** Another consideration is the likelihood that invited guests living outwith West Dunbartonshire may not be permitted or willing to travel to this area if the restriction level in West Dunbartonshire is higher than the level where they reside. Likewise, if the guest lives in an area which has a higher level than West Dunbartonshire then they should not travel.
- 4.9** It is now clear that the events proposed for the 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz cannot proceed as planned if the virus is still prevalent in West Dunbartonshire in March 2021. Even under level 0, the number of guests involved will need to be greatly reduced and careful consideration will need to be given to the alternative contingency plans. It is recommended that the Blitz Working Group should meet again to discuss contingency planning for the event and make a recommendation to the next meeting of the Committee.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** If events do proceed and there is still a risk of infection then a full risk assessment will be required to identify measures to be taken to mitigate any risk to the health of those members of staff and guests involved. Given that the proposed events will take place over the weekend there will could be higher staff costs due to additional hours worked.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** At its meeting in October 2020, the Committee noted that the sum of £3,023 was available from the 2019/20 unallocated funds and should be used towards costs related to the 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz. The Committee also agreed that the 2020/21 Cultural budget of £25,000 be used to meet costs associated with the 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz. Given that the memorial plaque will cost up to £11,750, this will leave a balance of £17,283 towards any other costs arising from the proposed event e.g. fees for Scottish Actors, costs incurred by RSNO, hospitality, etc.

- 6.2** As stated in paragraph 4.4 above, quotations were sought from three companies in respect of the memorial plaque to be located on Solidarity Plaza. Two bids were received but only one of the bids met the full specification and was successful. The contract was awarded to Alex MacIntyre Memorials Ltd, Glasgow.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The 80th Anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz is a significant event which the Council will be expected to deliver. However, if Covid-19 related restrictions remain in place in March 2021 then the planned events will need to be greatly reduced or cancelled which could result in reputational damage to the Council. To mitigate this risk VIP guests have been provided with the dates for their diaries but have also been made aware that the event could be cancelled or reduced at short notice. It is important that the Blitz Working Group considers the current situation in light of the strategic framework and makes a recommendation to the Committee as soon as possible.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** There are no impacts on any equality groups arising from the recommendations of this report. However, an EIA screening may need to be carried out prior to the final RSNO proposals being presented to the Committee or Blitz Working Group.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** Officers from Legal, Procurement and Finance Services have been consulted on the contents of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The development of town twinning activity could have some real educational and cultural benefits for those citizens who participate in such events and the promotion of West Dunbartonshire through these twinning or friendship links could potentially generate some economic benefit to the area through increased tourism. The involvement of local churches and communities is an important element of the Clydebank Blitz commemorations which fits well with the Council's strategy on community involvement and engagement.

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Date:	18 November 2020

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Appendices: None.

Background Papers: Scotland's Strategic Framework – Covid 19

Wards Affected: None.