

**Title of meeting:** Resources Decision Meeting

**Date of meeting:** 7 February 2024

**Subject:** Monuments and Memorials Update

**Report by:** Director of Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Lee Hunt, Cabinet Member for Resources

**Wards affected:** All

**Key decision:** Yes/No

**Full Council decision:** Yes/No

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**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To provide the Cabinet member with an update on Portsmouth City Council's management of the monuments and memorials within its care.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 **That the authority's current provision for caring for the monuments and memorials in its ownership is noted.**

2.2 **That the steps outlined in this report are approved.**

**3. Background**

3.1 Portsmouth has a high concentration of monuments and memorials, a legacy of its long history as a naval dockyard city and a military garrison. Portsmouth City Council (PCC) officially cares for 59 monuments and memorials. This excludes memorials that are in private ownership, for example those that are affixed to private residences or are on non-PCC land, unless they have been previously adopted by PCC. The Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common is owned and cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), but we do liaise with CWGC where appropriate given that it adjoins PCC land on Southsea Common and the Seafront.

3.2 PCC has an existing Monuments and Memorials Policy which was approved by the Cabinet Member for Resources on 8 March 2018. This policy would benefit from review particularly in alignment with recent changes in policy such as Retain and Explain and an increased environmental focus. The Monuments and Memorials

brief also covers blue plaques, and liaison with organisations such as CWGC and community groups who wish to commission their own memorials.

- 3.3 Monuments and Memorials are overseen by the Cultural Development and Projects Officer in the Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services directorate. The Monuments and Memorials budget is within the Resources portfolio, but any work to our memorials also involves working closely with a number of other areas of the authority. There is a small budget - currently £8,000 per annum - which is enough to cover basic cleaning of prominent memorials and any minor emergency works. Any extra works beyond basic cleaning or emergency repairs require capital allocations or external funding.
- 3.4 In recent years there has been a heightened level of scrutiny on monuments and memorials and other public history in terms of links with colonialism and slavery. To date PCC has not received any requests to remove any monuments or memorials, nor have there been any reasons to suspect that any memorials are at risk of damage. However, a number of heritage assets date from the period of the late nineteenth century when the British Empire was at its height, and we are conscious that in a diverse city people may hold different views. New research may also show stories in a different light. Experience during the Victoria Park National Lottery Heritage Fund project has shown that engagement with communities helps to place these in context.
- 3.5 A major national policy change recently is the publication of the Retain and Explain guidance by DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) in October 2023, supported by Historic England. The guidance has been published to advise custodians facing calls for the removal of heritage assets in their care or ownership. It applies to custodians of all public memorials, including statues, monuments and commemorations. The guidance emphasises that government policy on commemorative heritage assets which are subject to calls for removal is to keep them in situ and to retain them. Where heritage assets are contested, the preference of central government is to explain them rather than removal. Officers will monitor how the policy is implemented by other authorities and refer to the guidance as necessary.
- 3.6 Many of PCC's memorials are listed, in conservation areas or have other statutory protections and planning constraints. As their owner PCC has an obligation to care for them in line with relevant legislation and to obtain the necessary permissions.
- 3.7 We are aware of a number of monuments and memorials on PCC land that have not been adopted onto PCC's official list, but which the monuments and memorials brief could potentially be asked to care for. There are also assets on our list that are potentially the responsibility of other organisations but have not been divested, for example three structures at Staunton Country Park in Havant, which is managed by Hampshire County Council.
- 3.8 Management of PCCs monuments and memorials will be underpinned by the keeping of records of any work including photographs, the carrying out of baseline

inspections to enable monitoring for deterioration and the use of suitably accredited contractors, for example with membership of the Institute of Conservators (ICON) or the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).

- 3.9 Many of the memorials are over 100 years old and it is inevitable that they will in some respects show their age. From time to time restoration or conservation are suggested. Conservation is more ethically appropriate as restoration erases part of the history of a structure.
- 3.10 Requests are often received for new memorials. However, there is a lack of appropriate space in the city and several areas are already saturated, particularly Victoria Park, the Seafront and Old Portsmouth. The Monuments and Memorial Policy adopted in 2018 proposes alternatives to traditional memorials, including green infrastructure such as trees and gardens.
- 3.11 English Heritage have recently announced that their official Blue Plaque Scheme, which apart from a brief period has only been active in London, is to be rolled out nationally. Initially English Heritage will be working with three local authorities as a pilot. This will bring a high quality national-level scheme to the city and when the scheme is opened nationally PCC will direct requests for blue plaques to the official scheme in the first instance.
- 3.12 There are a number of major memorial projects currently underway in the city:
- In 2019 a capital allocation was made for designing, commissioning and installing a number of new plaques on the Cenotaph recording the names of several thousand personnel who have not been recorded until now. The cost of bronze has increased significantly in that time and additional capital funds will be required
  - In 2020 a report was taken to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development proposing a memorial to the Covid-19 Pandemic
  - In October 2022 Full Council approved a Notice of Motion to commission a statue of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. An update report was taken to Cabinet in October 2023. This stressed that any memorial will be a long-term project, awaiting guidance from the Royal Family, and emphasises the need for quality and longevity
  - The Southsea Coastal Scheme will require the resiting of several memorials on Sub-Frontage 3 between Clarence Pier and Blue Reef. We have advised on their location, which will be subject to planning permission and consultation with Historic England. Two memorials have recently been moved by the Coastal Scheme as they were at risk of being damaged by rough weather
  - A number of the memorials in Victoria Park are being repaired and cleaned as part of the ongoing National Lottery Heritage Fund project. This is being managed by the Victoria Park project team and is based on an earlier condition survey. Unsympathetic repairs have been remediated and adjacent trees cut back
  - Planning permission has been given for a new memorial to HMS Royal Oak, and the current plan is for inauguration in October 2024. This is being led by the HMS

Royal Oak Association but PCC will support around the installation works and event planning

- 3.13 It is proposed that a three-year plan is adopted initially to manage the city's monuments and memorials. Year One will include an in-house inspection of all monuments and memorials in PCC's care, using Historic England's condition survey template. Each asset will be given a Red-Amber-Green rating to aid prioritising for future works and additional specialist condition surveys will be considered where appropriate. PCC's asset register and Historic Environment Record will be reviewed to consider which memorials need adding to the adopted list and which should be divested.
- 3.14 Year Two will include the introduction of a 1, 2, or 3 yearly inspection programme, based on the baseline inspections in Year One. The baseline inspections in Year One will inform the commissioning of repairs, maintenance and cleaning based on identified need and priority. PCC's existing Monuments and Memorials Policy, adopted in 2018, will also be reviewed. The monuments and memorials section on PCC's website will be updated.
- 3.15 In Year Three inspections and remedial work will be continued as required. Work undertaken in previous years of the plan will enable the consideration of funding applications for capital works and for engagement projects. We will also be in a position to work with volunteers and other potential project partners.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 Monuments and Memorials are emotive to residents and to visitors and are an important part of our public realm. They are an important part of the city's heritage and civic identity. High profile events also require us to focus effort on specific memorials, for example ensuring the condition of the D-Day Stone and Cenotaph for major anniversaries.
- 4.2 With a limited budget for the high number of assets being cared for resources need to be targeted. The intention of the steps outlined in this report is to build a platform to secure external funding in the long-term.

#### **5. Integrated impact assessment**

- 5.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment report is included as Appendix A.

#### **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The report references the government's 'Retain and Explain' policy and guidelines (5 October 2023), which contains a summary of legislation germane to this area. Notably, the Secretary of State amended the legal definition of 'demolition' through The Town and Country Planning (Demolition - Description of Buildings) Direction 2021, meaning that planning permission is required for the demolition of any "statue, monument or memorial". The Town and Country Planning (General

Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 provides that demolition of certain such "commemorative structures" is permitted development (i.e. deemed planning permission), although not where they are more than 10 years old. Even where a "commemorative structure" is less than 10 years old, there are given circumstances where planning permission would still be required according to Schedule 2, Class 11, Part B of the 2015 Order.

6.2 Maintaining appropriate statues, memorials and monuments is within the powers of a local authority, and a plan to set priorities for their maintenance with regard to a budget is a reasonable deployment of the authority's powers.

**7. Director of Finance's comments**

7.1 The activities proposed within this report are expected to be funded from the existing service portfolio budgets, as approved by Full Council. Where there are any activities which have additional financial requirements, funding will need to be identified prior to their commencement.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
PCC Monuments and Memorials Policy	<a href="#">doc-memorials-policy.pdf (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>
DCMS Retain and Explain Guidance	<a href="#">Guidance for custodians on how to deal with commemorative heritage assets that have become contested - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>
Historic England Condition Survey template	<a href="#">historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/caring-for-heritage/monument-and-memorial-condition-survey-formpdf/</a>

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by ..... on .....

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Signed by: