

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Cabinet Meeting

Date of meeting: 24th September 2015

Subject: St George's Day Celebrations

Report by: Director of Culture & City Development

Wards affected: None

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of the Report

To consider a response to a question proposed through a Notice of Motion on 7th July 2015 by Cllr Galloway and seconded by Cllr Potter requesting the Events Team to consider an appropriate celebration to mark St George's Day in April 2016.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the date of St George's Day and those of the other UK's patron saints be promoted more widely for information.
- 2.2 That communities be encouraged to lead their own events, using the Council's Events process, to mark St George's Day should they wish.
- 2.3 That the specific UK country flags are flown in front of the Civic Offices to mark the relevant county saint's days e.g. the St George Cross on 23rd April, the Welsh flag on St David's Day (1st March) etc.
- 2.4 That the Events Team continue to co-ordinate any activities as part of the national celebration of the 90th birthday of Her Majesty the Queen and to develop and work with the University of Portsmouth to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare.

3. Background

- 3.1 Through a Notice of Motion on 7th July 2015 Cllrs Galloway and Potter highlighted that Nottingham Council had celebrated St George's Day with a special parade and had subsequently requested that the Events Team provide a report to the Cabinet

on proposals and associated costs to ensure that St George's Day is celebrated in a 'manner befitting a patron saint'.

- 3.2 Traditionally whilst the Events Team have co-ordinated a range of 'civic' events, including activities such as Mayor Making, Remembrance Sunday there have never been any bespoke celebrations of any of the UK's saints and therefore no plans or provision has ever been in place for a St George's Day celebration (nor any of the other UK patron saints).
- 3.3 The same date as St George's Day, 23rd April, is also recognised as the birth and death date of one of England's most celebrated writers, William Shakespeare and 23rd April 2016 will mark the 400th anniversary of his death. The Events Team have already been involved in some detailed discussions with the University of Portsmouth who are planning a Shakespeare Festival around this significant date for 2016 with a wide range of activities from an academic conference to a Romeo and Juliet style 'balcony scene' on a Portsmouth landmark building.
- 3.4 In light of the Shakespeare plans already being under discussion and key spaces, such as Guildhall Square booked, we would like to propose a promotion of the UK's patron saints days in parallel with encouraging communities in Portsmouth to organise and arrange their own event. Additionally we would highlight the relevant dates to other cultural and heritage organisations based in the city to encourage them to programme appropriate activities to raise awareness of the UK's patron saints.
- 3.5 The 21st April 2016 will be Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday and we are anticipating that there will be a range of national celebrations during the April and May period. At the current time we have no further details on these but anticipate that the Events Team will be co-ordinating opportunities for these celebrations to be marked in the city. These events will potentially clash with any celebrations of St George's Day in 2016 as we believe they could be on the weekend 23/24 April.
- 3.6 We will ensure that the appropriate flags are flying outside of the Civic Offices on the UK patron saints days to ensure that we are marking the occasion.
- 3.7 As a result of the decreasing resources the Events Team have been working to encourage communities to organise their own celebrations of activities which are important to them. The team already supports a number of different communities mark activities which are important to them for example the Bangladeshi Community lead a flag raising ceremony to mark their National Day and a similar flag based event has taken place recently following a request from Gibraltarians based in the city.
- 3.8 It should also be noted that when elections in May are scheduled then St George's Day on 23rd April has previously fallen within the Purdah period for Members in the run up to the elections.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 We are keen to encourage more communities to get involved in arranging and organising their own events and promoting celebrations on each of the UK's patron saints days could be supported.
- 4.2 The commitment and potential scope of both the marking of the national celebrations for the Queen's 90th birthday on 21st April and the University of Portsmouth's Shakespeare Festival in April 2016 means that a celebration of St George's Day on 23rd April 2016 would result in a potential clash of activities and a dilution of audiences.
- 4.3 That we need to be mindful of the organisation of events during the Purdah period.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as this is not a change to policy or service delivery.

6. Head of Finance's comments

- 6.1 The council's funding for directly promoted Events has reduced by £33,500 over the past two years therefore any events which are programmed to celebrate St George or any other patron saints will have to be self-funding.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1 As is made clear in the report the celebration of national saints days is a matter for each community and there is no legal requirement to celebrate such a day or not. The Council has a discretionary power under the Local Government Act 2000 to promote local well-being but no obligation to do so. Although no Equality Impact Assessment is required the Council must take any decisions in accordance with its Public Sector Equality Duty.

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Signed by:
Claire Upton-Brown
Assistant Director Culture & City Development

Appendices: None
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:

Title of document	Location