

Full Council

Date:	25 April 2017
Title:	Midsomer Murders Plaques
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report

1. To provide further background on the proposal to install 14 Midsomer Murders Plaques around the town, to consider the current position; and if appropriate: to authorise officers to have final say on Town Hall plaque positioning, to authorise further use of reserve funding and to consider giving permission for the required planning application to be made in the name of Thame Town Council.

Background

2. On 24 May 2016 the Town Council resolved “The Town Council grants permission to the Great British High Street team to sympathetically install Midsomer Murders Plaques (subject to Planning Permission) on the Town Council's property at the Town Hall and the Museum building (subject to Museum building tenant approval).”
3. A successful Midsomer Murders workshop took place at the Town Hall on 22 June 2016, which endorsed the idea of the plaques and an associated updated walking tour / leaflet.
4. Joint SODC / TTC funding of £1000 towards the costs of revising the leaflet was noted at the Council meeting on 16 August 2016 and the monies have been transferred to 21st Century Thame and ring-fenced for that purpose.
5. The Market Town Co-Ordinator action plan, as ratified at the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee meeting on 31 January 2017 includes commitment to progressing Midsomer Murders related tourism opportunities
6. The GBHS team / 21st Century Thame is investing £500 of the 2016/9 GBHS winnings in the project.
7. Helen Johns of the GBHS team has arranged for pictorial mock ups of the 14 locations and sought further permission / £100 financial contributions from each of the locations. Most (8) have now provided that further permission and some guarantee of funding, including the Museum and SODC Property / Economic Development. Two have declined permission.
8. Officers have suggested that rather than the Town Hall plaque being 350mm and above the disabled toilet window, for it to be 250mm in diameter and be placed just above head height to the right of the disabled toilet window as in mock up to the right.



9. Helen Johns has held initial discussions with SODC on planning aspects, and the planning team is overall not supportive. On a positive note, they confirmed that only one Listed Building planning application is needed (for all 13 listed building locations) at no cost. But they were critical of the existing blue plaques as installed (with appropriate planning permission) via 21st Century Thame and gave the impression that a “proliferation” of further plaques would not be supported.
10. Officers have provided some additional background (listed building details / block plans) to assist with the planning application.
11. Officers have had further discussions with Helen Johns on ways of maximising the likelihood of planning permission being granted. These include smaller plaques in situations where they can be installed at head height, and the application to be submitted in the name of Thame Town Council, rather than 21st Century Thame.
12. Funding for the project is largely in place, but as stated in the report for Council on 24 May 2016, it would be sensible to allocate the £100 Thame Town Council plaque contribution from the £615 “Midsomer Murders Signage” reserve and to provide the remaining balance as contingency for the project / further contribution to leaflet redesign / production costs.

Resource Appraisal

13. Some further support will be needed from officers to support Helen Johns, acting as our agent, in finalising the planning application.
14. The remaining £615 reserve balance to be fully allocated to the project, on top of the £500 previously allocated.

Risk Assessments

15. The main risk remains that planning permission is not granted, in which case it is likely that the project would be simply abandoned, or significantly reduced in scale.
16. There is a lower risk that currently unknown costs may materialise, but they will be considered if and when they arise.

Legal Powers: Local Government Act 1972 s 144 – Power to encourage tourism

Recommendation that:

- i) ***The Town Council authorises officers to have final say on Town Hall plaque positioning***
- ii) ***The Town Council authorises further use of £615 reserve funding for the wider project***
- iii) ***The Town Council gives permission for the required planning application to be made in the name of Thame Town Council.***