

Full Council

Report Title:	Blue Plaque
Meeting Date:	19 January 2021
Contact Officer:	Cllr Mike Dyer & Cassie Pinnells, Acting Town Clerk

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Thame Town Council support for installation of a Blue Plaque commemorating Frank H Kirby VC.

Benefits

2. Blue Plaques increase public awareness of the significance of certain sites and buildings and celebrate the achievements of people of note, adding to the historic substance of the town centre.
3. Blue Plaques extend local knowledge about the town's past, strengthen the sense of identity with our place in history, and add a further point of interest for visitors to the town.

Background

4. Initial approval was sought at the Culture, Leisure & Recreation Committee on 13th November 2012, at which time no objections were raised but further information was required.
5. Cllrs Dyer and Bretherton agreed to work on the project but subsequently became heavily involved in the Thame Remembers project so set this aside for later attention.
6. Over recent months further research has been carried out and matters have been taken forward to the extent that:
 - Approval has been received from the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board
 - Agreement has been confirmed by the owners of the property on which it would be installed, and the mounting position has been agreed
 - A plaque design and specification have been finalised and quoted, and a reputable local contractor will carry out installation.
 - An application has been submitted for Listed Buildings consent
 - A project budget has been finalised
 - And contact has been made with descendants, who will be invited to attend the unveiling of the Plaque and who have artefacts and memorabilia that will enable us to mount an exhibition at the same time.

Proposal

7. To install a Blue Plaque in commemoration of Frank H Kirby VC on the property known as Wavertree, 18 High Street, Thame, where he was born and lived his early life.
8. Full information accompanying this report covers the evidence for his connection with Thame, his significant life events, his military career, his medal citation, the proposed Plaque design and wording, and a mock-up of the Plaque installation at Wavertree.

9. It is not suggested that this be adopted as a Town Council project, nor even that Council Officers take the lead, but it is considered desirable that TTC associate themselves with the initiative and offer assistance where possible. The Town Council would be credited on the lower rim of the Plaque.
10. The project coordination would remain with Cllr Dyer so would require only minimal Officer involvement, but it would be helpful to channel grant funding and purchase orders through the Town Council's banking and accounting facilities.
11. It is intended that the project will be funded through external grants and/or fundraising within the local community. There is no expectation or requirement for direct financial support from TTC.
12. The proposed timeline is to install the Plaque in the autumn of 2021, most likely around mid-September

Promotion

13. Details yet to be finalised but unveiling of the Plaque would include some sort of ceremony with invited guests and local dignitaries, followed by a reception and light buffet at a venue yet to be determined but possibly Thame Museum.
14. The Thame Guide to Commemorative Plaques is out of print and due for updating anyway, but it is hoped that a new version (also adding the Robin Gibb plaque) can be released to coincide with the unveiling of the Kirby Plaque. The Market Town Coordinator has obtained quotations for the graphic origination and printing work and, subject to securing sufficient grant monies, a contribution towards the cost has been budgeted within this project.

Risk Assessment

15. Listed Building Consent could be refused but unlikely as, in twenty years' experience of 120 plaque installations in Oxfordshire, consent has not been an issue.
16. The homeowner has given permission and confirmed once the plaque is in place, public liability will be in place under their building's insurance.
17. Impact on staff time will be minimal as Cllr Dyer will take the lead applying for the grant funding requirements, project management, with TTC officers raising the purchase orders as required. If no grant funding is achieved the project will not take place.

Resource Appraisal

18. It is not envisaged that the small amount of Officer time required to support this initiative will have any detrimental effect on workload or other priorities. Grant Applications to be applied for by the Cllr Dyer

Action

19. To consider offering Thame Town Council's support to this project.

Recommendation

- i) ***The Town Council approves support for the project.***
- ii) ***The Town Council approves permission the Listed Building Consent application and any grant funding applications are made in the name of the Town Council.***