

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Events Committee

Report by: Jennie Currie

Job Title: Community & Civic Manager

Subject: Untold Stories of the Great War

1 Purpose of Report

To request funding to support the WW1 Living History trail – Untold Stories of the Great War, after receiving a grant from Greenham Trust Ltd.

2 Background

The Town Council's WW1 Working Party has been working since early 2017 on the idea of holding a WW1 Living History Trail.

The Untold Stories of the Great War project aims to tell the stories of a selection of servicemen from Thatcham who fought in World War One. The one day will consist of guided tours around Thatcham where visitors will be introduced to actors dressed as WW1 servicemen who will be playing the role of a specific Thatcham resident.

A number of volunteers have been compiling the research for this project and servicemen from the Royal School of Military Survey are working on an interactive map that would go alongside the event.

Three different dates for the event were proposed. The first in September 2017 was discounted as funding was unavailable. In 2018 a grant was secured from Greenham Trust for part of the cost and a date in July was published. On the recommendation from a member of the Working Party contact was made with a member of a local amateur theatrical group who started to organise actors for the event. In June it became clear that there were not enough actors for the project and the event was postponed. Another date in September was considered but again insufficient numbers of volunteers were available so the project was cancelled.

There has been a number of members of the public expressing disappointment that the event was not held.

Greenham Trust gave permission for the grant to be used for the publication of the research gathered in the form of the book "Thatcham The Great War 1914-1918" which was launched on 11th November 2018 and the booklet "A tour of Thatcham Soldiers" which will be distributed when the Victoria Cross stones interpretation panel is unveiled in December 2018.

3 Proposal

That the project is restarted with Town Council Officers taking a greater role in the organisation of the event. The event would take place during Heritage Open Days in September 2020 which would be two months before the centenary of the unveiling of the town's war memorial.

As the research has already been completed, the next step would be to engage with a community group to write the scripts for the actors. Kennet School had previously expressed an interest in this task but at the time could not fit it into their calendar but they could be given the whole of 2019 to complete this.

In early 2020 the Town Council, using existing links with a range of local amateur theatrical groups in the area, would look for actors to take on the roles and source uniforms/costumes.

Once all the key aspects are in place tickets for the event could be released at least 3 months in advance of the date. With the increased planning time there would also be opportunities to work with Thatcham Historical Society, West Berkshire Museum and other interested organisations to enhance the event with relevant displays.

4 Financial Implications

The estimated cost of the costume hire is £2,000 subject to confirmation of the quantity and type of uniforms required.

The estimated cost of additional staffing, advertising, expenses and promotional materials is £1,000.

5 Legislation

Local Government Act 1974, s.145 - Provision of entertainment.

6 Reference to Council Plan

Objective 3 - To enhance the sense of community within Thatcham.

7 Consultation

n/a

8 Recommendation

That the Untold Stories of the Great War project is fixed into the calendar of events for 2019 to 2020 and that funding of £3,000 is allocated to the project when setting budgets for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.
