

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Date: 26 September 2019

Reporting officer: Tourism & Town Twinning Manager
Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: Dickens 150

Purpose and summary of report:

To share with the Committee emerging plans for Gravesham to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death in 2020.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee comment on the development of the Dickens 150 programme and contribute ideas.

1. Background

- 1.1 Charles Dickens died at Gad's Hill Place, Higham, on the 9 June 1870. 2020 will mark the 150th anniversary of his death and this will be commemorated nationally and Kent wide.
- 1.2 A commemorative service will take place at Westminster Abbey, with a laying of a wreath, after the Evensong on 9 June.
- 1.3 The Dickens Fellowship International annual conference will take place in London in July and it is expected that around 100 delegates will visit Gad's Hill Place between 17 and 19 July.
- 1.4 The Museum of London will launch a new exhibition, "Technicolour Dickens", as part of the commemoration.
- 1.5 Officers from Gravesham, Medway, Swale, Thanet and Visit Kent are working together to coordinate a programme of events across the County.
- 1.6 Consideration is being given as to how Gravesham will commemorate this event and to this end the Tourism Manager has had preliminary meetings with the Gad's Hill Heritage trust, Gad's Hill School, the local Dickens Fellowship and Owletts. The aim being to raise awareness of Dickens' strong associations with Gravesham and to increase visitor numbers to the Borough.

2. Dickens 150 – Potential Programme of Events

- 2.1 Preliminary discussions outline the following elements of a Dickens 150 commemorative programme in Gravesham:

Walks

- 2.2 Dickens was an avid and energetic walker and it would be pertinent to promote a local walking route that highlights the different locations Dickens used to visit or walk through when he lived in the borough. This could include:
- 2.2.1 A Memorial Walk to mark the occasion of Dickens' death, possibly between Cobham, Higham and Higham Station with interpretative on route.
 - 2.2.2 A walk from Gad's Hill Place to Rochester Cathedral on Tuesday 9 June.
 - 2.2.3 Gabriella Björk Gabbitas, from Owletts, is planning an interactive walk around Cobham, with the involvement of costumed Dickens characters.

Theatre Performance

- 2.3 The Tourism Manager has contacted Ryan Philpott of the "*What the Dickens?*" Theatre Company and they have prepared a proposal to develop a new one-man play to commemorate the anniversary. The play will be called "The Final Farewell" and will tell the story of Dickens' last ever public reading in 1870. Ryan Philpott will play the part of George Dolby (Dickens' Theatre Manager) and Charles Dickens himself. The play will culminate with the retelling of Dickens' last meal with his sister Georgina at Gad's Hill Place.
- 2.4 There is the potential to have series of performances in May/June 2020 with the possibility of a number of those being held at Gad's Hill Place and another larger location within the Borough.
- 2.5 The budget for preparation of the script and performance is £4,000 for 6 performances. Consideration is being given to any additional costs and the prospect of recouping these through ticket sales.

Dickens' Quotes Project

- 2.6 This emerging idea is to encourage the public to submit their favourite Dickens' quotation, via social media and other channels and to supplement these with others with the aim of selecting 150 quotations that are then displayed in different, some unexpected, locations, sizes and forms around the borough, e.g. vinyls on vacant shop windows, on hoardings, seating, etc.
- 2.7 There is interest from the other Districts in joining in with the same scheme which has the scope to add strength and profile to the project and the possibility of additional funding.

A Dickens' Exhibition

- 2.8 Preparation of resources and an exhibition that communicates the strong association that Charles Dickens has with the borough, identifying those locations in Gravesham that have links to Dickens' life and works and Dickens in film/TV, or around a Dickens' theme that could be promoted to attract additional visitors.

A Dickensian Cricket Match

- 2.9 Dickens often organised cricket matches at Gad's Hill Place at a time of early development of the sport. The Tourism Manager will make contact with a local club to seek views on the possibility of organising a cricket match at Gad's Hill or Cobham Hall during 2020.
- 2.10 2020 appears to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the formation of Kent County Cricket Club and it is intended to see if the County Club can also be involved and help deliver this.

Art Workshops and Projects

- 2.11 A programme of community based art projects could be held in 2020 to engage young people and the wider community in Dickens' works.
- 2.12 The Kent-wide group, subject to funding, is also looking at a community project involving decorating/painting Dickens writing desks. The desks will then be showcased at different locations around the County.

Gad's Hill Place

- 2.13 Gad's Hill School's Head Teacher, Paul Savage, has confirmed that there are a number of events being planned for the school next year. These include a performance of Oliver Twist in February/March 2020 and a Dickens' Week around the 9 June. The school is also looking to invite other local primary schools to Gad's Hill Place to understand more about Charles Dickens.
- 2.14 The Heritage Trust will be focused on guided tours of Dickens' House (with Gravesham's tourism team assisting with bookings) and they have ambitions to secure Dickens' memorabilia or furniture during the commemoration.
- 2.15 In addition to the commemoration at Westminster Abbey on the 9 June, it is understood that there may be a commemorative event at Rochester Cathedral on or near the day. It is felt that the occasion of Dickens' death needs to be marked at Gad's Hill itself on the 9 June and thought is being given to how that can be done.

3. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 3.1 Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	No direct implications at this stage.
Finance and Value for Money	Subject to confirmation of a programme, likely expenditure and income, a report will be submitted to the council's Management Team in respect of funding to deliver the programme. This will take account of what external funding can be made secured from e.g. National Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council and ticket sales.
Risk Assessment	It is a positive action to promote the borough's links with Dickens. Negative promotion could be derived if the council does not make plans for an appropriate way to commemorate the 150 th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data?</p> <p>A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	Sustainable Gravesham: a thriving and sustainable local economy, built on the foundations of high quality regeneration and development projects;
Crime and Disorder	No implications.
Digital and website implications	A programme of activity to promote Charles Dickens and his connection to the borough will present many opportunities for promotion of the programme and engaging residents in Dickens's works.
Safeguarding children and	No direct implications at this stage.

vulnerable adults	
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