

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

## **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 3 March 2020

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

**Subject:** Dickens 150

### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To update the Committee on plans for Gravesham to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death in 2020.

### **Recommendations:**

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

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In September 2019 the Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee received a report outlining initial thoughts as to a programme to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death. Minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 2.
- 1.2 This report is an update on how the Dickens 150 programme has progressed.

## **2. Dickens 150 – Programme of Events**

### *Walks*

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2.1 Gabriella Björk Gabbitas, from Owletts, has written a script for a self-guided interactive walk around the village of Cobham, involving actors playing some well known Dickens' characters. Walks will take place every half hour on Saturday 6 June from 11am to 5pm. Tickets are £10 per person and places are bookable via the Visit Gravesend Visitor Information Point.
- 2.2.2 It is the intention to organise a walk from Gad's Hill Place to Rochester Cathedral to mark the anniversary and attend a commemorative service, but we have yet to receive confirmation as to a date for this.

- 2.2.3 Discussions are taking place with KENT AONB in respect of the planning of a memorial walk between Gads Hill Place and Cobham Village to mark the occasion of Dickens' death and to provide for a 'legacy' to the project which also links with the Dickens walk between Higham Station and Higham Village.

#### *Theatre Performance*

- 2.2 The Dickens Theatre company will be performing a play called "Dickens' Dream" at Gad's Hill Place. The Play takes you through Charles Dickens' final hours alongside his sister-in-law, Georgina. This is a partnership project with Gad's Hill School and the Dickens' Trust. Performances will take place on Saturday 30 May, 7pm; Sunday 31 May, 2.30pm; Sunday 14 June, 2.30pm; Saturday 20 June, 7pm and Sunday 21 June, 2.30pm.
- 2.3 Bookings can be made via the Visit Gravesend Visitor Information Point - £25 per person, including refreshment on arrival and a look through the various rooms.
- 2.4 The Chesterfield Town Twinning Association will visit Gravesham the week commencing the 8<sup>th</sup> June and Gravesham Town Twinning Association have booked the performance on Saturday 13 June at 7pm for their group.

#### *Dickens' Quotes project*

- 2.5 The public are to be encouraged to submit their favourite Dickens' quotation via social media and other media channels with the aim of selecting 150 quotations that are then displayed in different locations and forms around the Borough, e.g. vinyls on vacant shop windows, on hoardings, seating, illuminated script, etc.

#### *A Dickens' Exhibition*

- 2.6 "The Old Curiosity Shop" exhibition will be coming to Gravesend Borough Market from Saturday 23 May to Sunday 28 June. The aim is for visitors to discover the world of Dickens and his links with Gravesham. We want to communicate the strong associations that Charles Dickens has with the Borough; identifying those locations in Gravesham that have links to Dickens' life and works.

#### *A Dickensian Cricket Match*

- 2.7 Visit Kent are leading on this and are in discussions with Kent County Cricket Club to see if there would be interest in organising a Dickens' Anniversary Cricket Match in an appropriate location in Gravesham.

#### *Art Workshops and Projects*

- 2.8 A bid was submitted to Arts Council England to deliver arts workshops, an exhibition in the Blake Gallery and some an education project involving some of the schools in the borough. Unfortunately, this bid has been turned down, but discussions are taking place to allocated some funding to perhaps a scaled down element of these projects.

### **3. Other Partners' Programmes**

- 3.1 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 during 2020 to understand more about Charles Dickens.
- 3.2 The Dickens' Heritage Trust will be focused on guided tours of Dickens' House (with Gravesham's Tourism Team helping with bookings). These will take place on one Saturday and one Sunday a month between April and October 2020.
  - 3.3 Gad's Hill School intends to mark the anniversary on 9 June. Details yet to be confirmed.
  - 3.4 Westminster Abbey will mark the anniversary on Tuesday 9 June. We are investigating how to get invitations for representatives from Gravesham.
  - 3.5 Medway will have an exhibition in the Guildhall Museum; Their Dickens' festival in June and at Christmas; An Art Exhibition at their Art Gallery in the Visitor Centre; lectures at the Guildhall Museum; the Rochester Cathedral's service; Open Top Bus; performances at the Castle and illuminated projections. Some details yet to be confirmed.
  - 3.6 Swale held a Literary Festival 19 to 23 February; a series of walks is planned throughout the months.
  - 3.7 St Mary's Church in Higham – On Saturday 27 June at 7pm there will be performances from students from Gad's Hill School and local poet and performer James McKay.

#### **4. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 4.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

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
<b>Legal</b>	No implications.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	A £10,000 budget was allocated to this project. Some of the activity within the market will be eligible for support from the GO TRADE project.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	A risk assessment will be required for elements of the programme, e.g. the walks.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<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 <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>?</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>Collection of data for bookings via Visitor Information Centre as already in place.</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>.</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<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>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</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>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	#2 Place
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	No implications.
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	Promotion of the programme and campaigns through Visit Gravesend, Gravesham Borough Council and Visit Kent channels.
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	Safeguarding procedures will be applied in respect of any activity related to children and vulnerable adults.

**Minutes of Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee, Thursday 26 September, 7.30pm  
(Item 3)**

**Dickens 150**

The plans to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Dickens' death in 2020 were shared with the Committee.

Key information was shared with Members pertaining to Charles Dickens, his death at Gads Hill on 09 June 1870, his history with the Borough and other areas in the Country that would be commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Specifically, Gravesham officers are aware that there will be a memorial service at Westminster Abbey as he was buried there; the Assistant Director (Communities) wanted to raise Gravesham's profile and make it more known that Charles Dickens spent his last fourteen years of his life living at Gad's Hill Place and died there.

The Assistant Director (Communities) added that Portsmouth apparently have the original piece of furniture that Charles Dickens died upon and the Gad's Hill Place Trust are enquiring about bringing it back to Gravesham.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that officers from Gravesham, Medway, Swale, Thanet and Visit Kent were working together to coordinate a programme of events across the County.

The Assistant Director (Communities) further briefed Members on the potential programme of events for 'Dickens 150' listed on pages 58-59 of the report:

- Dickens' Walks
- Theatre Performances
- Dickens' Quotes Projects
- A Dickens' Exhibition
- A Dickensian Cricket Match
- Art Workshops and Projects
- Gad's Hill Place

One Member praised the quote project as he felt it was a very good way of communicating Dickens' work; he noted that there would be a memorial service at Westminster Abbey to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary and asked if a small number of tickets could be made available to ensure Gravesham had a presence there. He also asked officers whether Higham Parish Council had been contacted as they would inevitably be making preparations to commemorate the anniversary.

The Assistant Director (Communities) assured the Committee that contacting Higham and Shorne Parish Council was a priority and the team wanted them to be involved in the commemorations. With regard to Westminster Abbey, it is understood that the ticketing will be run by the Dickens Fellowship UK and they will be contacted to inform them of the Council's interest in attending; perhaps The Mayor and a few other official Gravesham representatives could attend.

Several more suggestions were made by the Committee to promote Dickens 150, outlined below:

- The schools needed to become involved as Charles Dickens was a very important figure in Gravesham and the Country's history; primary and secondary schools to be contacted

nearer the time to get them involved. Five-ten minute excerpts from his literature could be acted out in the Town Centre, for example

- Competitions in schools about Dickens' literature
- Raise awareness of local places in the Borough associated with Charles Dickens
- Add in any promotional advertisement to the Visit Gravesham website and the Gravesham visitor information point
- A Dickens' scarecrow competition, where schools make Dickens' characters as scarecrows, could be carried out again with the inclusion of famous Dickens quotes around the Town on the scarecrows and on signs, etc.

The Chair thanked the officers for their informative report and asked them to incorporate the Committee's ideas into the programme.