

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL
CIVIC, HERITAGE AND EVENTS COMMITTEE

Town Clerk's Open Report

16 March, 2021

1) **Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations**

- **To note the report**

2021 continues to be a challenging year, and although the vaccine programme is being rolled out across the community, it will clearly be months until any kind of normal life returns.

Plans for the Birthday Celebrations are moving forward in line with the programme presented at the January meeting. The Town Clerk and Civic Officer brought together representatives from the organisations who collaborate to make the annual celebrations possible, and they unanimously approved of the virtual programme as presented.

It is proposed that the virtual event is broadcast initially on 23 April, Shakespeare's Birthday, and that it is repeated on Saturday 24 April, which has become established as the day the event usually takes place. Both broadcasts will be transmitted from 11:00am, the time the flag unfurling ceremony traditionally occurs. PR company, Advent Communications, have been fully briefed, and will coordinate the flow of information to the media as and when necessary in the lead up to the 23 April/24 April.

The Mayor and Chairman of the District Council will feature first, both speaking from a scripted welcome to the 2021 celebrations. This will be filmed in the Town Hall with the councillors standing in front of the colourful Big Birthday Banner with the Bard's face depicting the names of all his plays. The banner will not be flown in Bridge Street this year but as it is now a favourite of the Birthday Celebrations, it was considered proper to incorporate it into the proceedings.

Contribution from A Level Drama Students

Throughout the 'Cradle to Grave' pilgrimage, sound bites will be performed, accompanied by visual images of the town and of past birthday celebrations. It was suggested that A-Level drama students from each of the senior schools should be encouraged to perform up to a maximum of two readings. It was further proposed that one of the selected readings should be performed in another language, with subtitles, to represent the influence of

Shakespeare works around the world. The schools who have currently responded have both indicated a positive willingness to participate and have both agreed to film the readings in-house to expedite any issues regarding the current Covid regulations which is very helpful.

However, following a meeting with Dr Paul Edmondson head of education at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, he is against broadcasting the Shakespeare sound bites in any language other than English to prevent injured pride by those whose language was not broadcast.

Participation from Primary Schools

Following a very moving tribute by the primary schools in 2020, who independently arranged a virtual parade to church, the Headteacher of Holy Trinity Primary School has indicated that her school would be willing to film another virtual parade for this year's event. This will be shown alongside other images of birthday parades of the past, to recreate the flavour of the event for viewers.

Country Dancing

Although not something organised directly by the Council or the former Birthday Celebrations Committee, for many decades this has been a joyous activity which has taken place prior to the main event. We are hoping to incorporate images of the dancing within the programme and are currently trying to source either a short film/and or still images to represent this longstanding activity.

Shakespeare Morris

The Stratford based Shakespeare Morris are another group who have supported the Celebrations for decades, by dancing at the end of the formal parade to avoid causing too much of a delay in proceedings.

Pragnell Shakespeare Award

The RST will manage and film the presentation of the 2021 Pragnell Shakespeare Award, although currently the name of the recipient, at the time of writing, has not yet been formally announced.

Flag Poles and Flags

Ten large poles will be installed by Edward Brain along the central reservation on Tuesday 20 April and will be removed one week later. Following consultation with other partners about which international flags to fly, it became obvious that it would be diplomatically challenging to decide which ones could be included to occupy a very limited number of spaces, without causing deep offence to other countries. It was therefore proposed that for 2021, the flags flown would be limited to the following list:

- Union Flag
- Saint George
- Stratford District
- Stratford Town
- Theatre
- Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
- Stratford Town Trust
- King Edward V1 School
- Shakespeare's England
- NHS

It was considered highly appropriate to incorporate the NHS and Frontline Workers flag at this year's celebrations, in recognition of the amazing work achieved worldwide and within the local community in connection with the Covid pandemic. An inaugural NHS and Frontline Workers Day will take place on 5 July, and further information will be found about this later in the report.

The representatives invited to unfurl the designated flags would then be encouraged to present floral tributes at Shakespeare's Grave. This would be done following the placing of the Quill in the hand of the effigy overlooking Shakespeare's grave. The Quill to be received by the Head Boy/Girl from 'Mr Shakespeare' inside Big School, using the format of previous years. The various cameos will be filmed separately and edited later, when the sound and visuals are added.

Fanfares Drum Rolls and the National Anthem

It is anticipated that the Coventry Corps of Drums, who have enthusiastically supported the Celebrations over many decades, will be available to provide us with recordings of the principal music heard at the flag unfurling ceremony. If, due to Covid restrictions this does not prove possible, recordings of a drum roll, fanfare and the National Anthem will be sourced directly by Dudley Simpson.

Finally, it is hoped that an actor from the RSC will conclude the day of celebration by reading the very appropriate 'Our revels now are ended' from *The Tempest Act 4 Scene 1*.

Shakespeare Service - 25 April

A special service will be broadcast from Holy Trinity Church on Sunday 25 April, including the preaching of the Shakespeare Sermon by Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of St. John's College Cambridge. More details regarding the content of the service are yet to be announced, but there is every likelihood that the Mayor will be invited to participate.

2) Shakespeare Schools Week 15 - 21 March

- **To note the report**

Arranged for local primary school children since 2014 by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the event is going ahead again this year following its cancellation in 2020. The theme is *Wellbeing*, and the event will be totally online. A programme of virtual activities, starting on Monday 15 March, will include contributions by some of the country's best-loved children's authors, artists and celebrities. The 2021 programme will offer support to teachers, families and children with their home schooling adventures, and will hopefully help to bring Shakespeare to life.

For further information see www.shakespeareweek.org.uk and @ShakespeareWeek

3) Christmas Lights Switch-On - 25 November

- **To note the proposed Switch-On date**
- **To approve the time of the Switch-On**

- **To discuss ways in which the Switch-On event could help raise additional funds towards the long-term future of the Christmas Lights display**

The Christmas Lights Committee Chairman, Matthew Coombes, has confirmed that the lights display will be fully installed and ready to go by Thursday 25 November. Mr Coombes is also confident that there will again be a full display of festive lights during the Christmas period.

Members are requested to consider viable ways in which additional funds could be raised on Switch-On night, without being detrimental to the event. The Lights Committee would welcome any guidance and suggestions to help ensure long-term financial security of providing Christmas Lights in Stratford-upon-Avon for the future.

4) **NHS and Frontline Workers Day – Monday 5 July 2021**

- **To approve participation on the 5 July each year**
- **To purchase a dedicated flag 150cm x 90cm (5ft x 3ft) at a cost of £34.98, including delivery and VAT**

The design of the flag is attached as Appendix 'A'

Councils throughout the UK are being encouraged to take part in the NHS and Frontline Workers Day, which is being launched on 5 July 2021, a unique day of celebration and commemoration of those who work tirelessly within the health care sector.

It is planned to make this an annual event, a way of raising awareness of the NHS Charities Together and to raise valuable funds.

The proposed programme for the day:

- 10:00am – raising of the flag, for a period of seven days.
- 11:00am – Two minutes silence, Last Post and Reveille
- 13:00pm - Toast to the Heroes

“To those who give so much, 24 hours a day, seven days a week within the NHS, social care and on the front line, we thank and salute you.”

- 13:00pm - Street parties or other special events
- 16:00pm - Afternoon Tea
- 20:00pm - Clap for the Heroes, followed by the ringing of church bells to mark 73 years of the NHS.

5) **Centenary of the Royal British Legion**

- **Members are requested to note the report**

The Royal British Legion was formed on 15 May 1921, bringing together four national organisations of ex-Servicemen that had established themselves after the First World War. The Legion 100 programme which is being finalized will celebrate the tremendous achievements of RBL during the last 100 years and demonstrate how and why they will continue to play a key part in helping our Armed Forces community and their families into the future.

Due to the Covid pandemic the local Stratford-upon-Avon Branch has not been holding meetings and has therefore not discussed how best to mark the centenary in May. I have asked the Chairman to let us know when a decision has been made, even if they decide on a fairly low-key event it may be something that the Mayor would be happy to support.

6) **CIL Projects**

- **To determine and recommend any potential CIL Projects – Town Clerk**

The Council's current accrual of CIL monies has been allocated to finance the re-design of Bridge Street and High Street. However further money will be received in due course, so the Committee is requested to give consideration to this issue by identifying any future potential projects.

7) **Town Hall New Income Streams**

- **To review and receive any suggested new income streams for the Town Hall**

Considering the current situation, it is unlikely that the Town Hall will receive any requests for bookings in the short-term. However, members are requested to continue to review possible new income

streams and to bring them to the Committee for debate when appropriate.

8) Mayor Making

- **Members are requested to note the report**

For a second year, the celebrations for Mayor Making are going to be very different from normal. By early May, the Government will have removed the legislation allowing zoom meetings to be held during the pandemic, therefore it will be possible for Mayor Making to take place on a face-to-face basis. However, due to current social distancing measures, far fewer attendees will be permitted to attend. Although final discussions are yet to take place to determine the safest way to proceed, it is likely that apart from members and officers that few additional guests will be present. The usual civic dignitaries will not be invited which we hope will leave sufficient space for some of the Mayor Elect's family to be present to witness this auspicious occasion.

Civic Dinner

It will not be feasible to hold this event until after 21 June, after which time the Mayor will be seeking an appropriate date for the dinner to take place.

Civic Sunday

Following the format of the 2020 service, the service on the 23 May, when the Council takes the newly elected Mayor to church, will no doubt be organised virtually due to current Covid measures. The Vicar of Holy Trinity will invite the Mayor to undertake a reading, and if past tradition is followed, the newly appointed Council Chaplain, Reverend Dr Roy Lodge, will preach.

No further information is currently available, but members will be updated as and when further details become available.

Civic Officer
10.03.20