

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL - WAR MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 July 2023

Agenda

1. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Present Cllrs Hilyer (Chair), Nicholls (Vice-Chair),
Cawley, Hoptroff, Powner, Swindlehurst M, Webster
Apologies Cllrs Birch, Swindlehurst L, Worthington, Young,
Attendance Denise Wheat (Town Clerk)

It was noted that

- (a) membership of the committee for the year 2023-24: Cllr Derek Hilyer (chair), Cllr Kate Nicholls (vice-chair), all town councillors; Town Clerk (or assistant) in attendance and Lengthsman when appropriate;
- (b) in accordance with Standing Order 62, “the public and press shall be admitted to all meeting of the Council and its committees and sub-committees, which may, however, temporarily exclude the public by means of the following resolutions: that in view of the [special][confidential] nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw”. Standing Order 63 requires that “the Council shall state the special reasons for exclusion”. Standing Order 64 specifies that “at all meetings of the Town Council members of the public will be allowed to address the meeting. Fifteen minutes will be set aside for questions in relation to the responsibilities of the Town Council Members of the public should notify the Town Clerk of the questions or statements by 1:00am on the Wednesday preceding the meeting”.
- (c) the terms of reference for this meeting (pending revision to Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference) are those obtaining at the last meeting, namely
 - The War Memorials’ Committee is a committee of Leek Town Council and will report regularly to Council.
 - Leek Town Council will appoint a chair and vice chair to the War Memorials Committee at the Council’s AGM.
 - The quorum of the committee will be one-third of its members and in no case be fewer than three*.
 - The Committee will comply with and have due regard to the Council’s policies, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct.
 - The delegated responsibility of the Committee will be:
 - To manage and maintain the following war memorials: Nicholson War Memorial, Ball Haye Green War Memorial and Leekbrook War Memorial.
 - To promote the history and heritage of the war memorials.
 - To work with other organisations and local community groups, with regards to Remembrance Sunday and other events.
 - To make recommendations to Council regarding commemorative events
- (d) * In line with advice the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association the quorum shall be three.

2 MINUTES

In was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held 13 February 2023 were a true record.

3 FINANCE REPORT:

It was noted that current funding for the war memorials is

- £6,759 which is earmarked as the Friends of Nicholson Reserve
- £6,000 earmarked in the 2023-2024 budget for War Memorial Maintenance
- £2,000 for the Nicholson Clock maintenance
- £1,350 for the Remembrance events

THE MEMORIALS

4 In General

It was agreed that

- A stone mason who had been invited to advise on the cleaning of Bank House should also check the three Council memorials;
- Safety-critical work on memorials should be instituted as soon as possible
- Cllr Cawley should further research aspects of Leek's war sacrifice, including the first (1st war) and last (2nd war) deaths; and that he should advise on bidding to the War Memorials Trust (and English Heritage etc)
- Improvements to war memorials should be publicised as and when they happen
- All developments should be undertaken bearing in mind the possibility of securing sponsorship or assistance in kind from partner/neighbouring organisations

5 Leekbrook War Memorial

It was agreed that

- the Leekbrook memorial should be cleaned, repaired, if possible by November 2023, with the wreath supports replaced;
- the paved area to the rear of the memorial should be maintained by the council, and the tree/shrub surround should be reviewed to enhance rather than obscure the memorial;
- Staffordshire County Council should be asked to allow the Town Council to pave the grass verge between the road and the memorial
- a neighbour who has most kindly weeded the paved area should be consulted on future maintenance and the given a tangible mark, and certificate of recognition of the Council's gratitude.

6 Ball Haye Green War Memorial:

It was reported that ctd architects had proposed conservation masonry repairs to Ball Gaye Green war memorial.

It was agreed that

- The lengthsmen should identify work that can be carried out in-house or by the identified contractor
- additional tenders should be sought for work (excluding what can be undertaken in-house) in line with the report.

7 Nicholson War Memorial:

It was reported

- the ctd architects had provided a the Fabric Condition Inspection on the Nicholson War Memorial in May 2020;
- an estimate for work, following the report, had been received from Midland Masonry (December 2022), specifically referring to repairs to the steps, cleaning up to the level of the coping balustrade, and cleaning to paving within the perimeter wall: this totals £7,489.

It was noted that

- alternative estimates are being sought for this work;
- all work undertaken will be undertaken in line with English Heritage/War Memorials Trust guidelines.

It was agreed that

- safety critical repairs to the surrounding paving and steps should be carried out as a matter of urgency (with attendant Risk Assessments)
- additional estimates sought for remainder of the work proceeding with this work with a view to completion by 31 March 2024
- working with partners, the environs of the monument should be improved, particularly
 - flood lighting of the monument (from Sparrow Park) should be improved, in consultation with the neighbouring hotel
 - the gardens - owned by Leek Town Lands Trust (charity 244672) and kept by SMDC – should be reviewed: to be effective work is needed to end anti-social behaviour in this area including, but not

- only, by making SMDC cctv coverage effective
- further improving Sparrow Park (SMDC has recently passed responsibility for the planters to the Town Council) including perhaps high-quality banners representing the different features of Leek including the Monument; utilising the Smithfield Centre shop awnings (facing the monument)
- working with the Events and Allotments Committees and the chatty benches initiative to broaden the facilities in this part of Leek
- the following should be attended to: an electricity smart meter upgrade; provision of more energy efficient lighting; revision of the building maintenance plan.

8 Tours of NWM

It was reported that Jill Norman, North Staffordshire Operations Manager for Support Staffordshire, on behalf of herself and about 10 others guides to the Monuments, would like to reinstate the tours.

It was agreed that, notwithstanding the decision of the previous committee to suspend tours of the memorial until 2024, they should be restarted on 1 October 2023, subject to satisfactory completion of the risk assessment.

9 Other War Memorials:

To note that the other outdoor war memorials in or relating to Leek are,

- C company 5th Staffordshire Leek Battalion Home Guard, Merryton Low above Thorncliffe
- St Edwards Church Leek War Memorial – the Town Council has some involvement with this church- owned memorial (in the terms of reference of the committee) – plus the Victory Painting,
- In St Mary's and All Saints Churches,
- Birch Gardens on Buxton Road (SMDC-owned) was dedicated in 2018 as a Centenary Field
- Memorials in the Leek Cemetery referencing the Peninsular War, Polish involvement in the Second World War,

CENTENARY OF THE NICHOLSON MEMORIAL

10 Event in 2025

It was agreed that

- a major event should be held in 2025 to mark the centenary of the dedication of the Nicholson War Memorial on 20 August 1925 and linking this to a celebration of Leek and its assets and achievements: a list of activities and features could be built up including, possibly
- a steering group should be established to organise the event.

It was noted that the event might include:

- Lights of Honour – electric tea lights displayed in the houses of the fallen;
- A centenary walk led by the Council involving RBL, service cadets, other youth organisations – to take in the three memorials, Birch Park, and St Edwards Church;
- Banners (professionally designed, of excellent standard) on three or five of the high lamp standards in Sparrow Park, each illustrating an aspect of Leek;
- Completion of replanting of the Park;
- Projection on to the Derby Street face of the monument (the fallen, medals, battle honours etc);
- Collecting photographs etc for a website page/brochure about all three council memorials, Leek involvement in the wars, the fallen, the centenary, note of other memorials in the town (some lost) etc;
- Other arts and educational initiatives, including the play 'the Chocolate Soldier'
- Special market.

LONGER-TERM PLANNING

11 **It was agreed** that a long-term plan could include

- in light of the 2023-24 work, further improving the Monument, possibly bidding for funds to undertake higher elevation cleaning, with internal refurbishment;
- commemorating the centenary of the Monument in August 2025, possibly linking the commemoration to a wider event at Sparrow Park, a celebration of 80 years of peace and marking the significant improvements to the town (with Events Committee);
- improving the environs of the Monument, including its gardens and Sparrow Park;
- making the Leekbrook memorial the centre of improvements to the Leekbrook corridor (Cheadle Road between Leek and the Churnet Valley/Caldon Canal/Cheddleton);

- reviewing the Ball Hay Memorial charity (number 522692, ‘Public Open Space and Recreation Ground’ - the Town Council is the sole trustee, but no income or expenditure has been recorded for at least 5 years) – perhaps to change the title to one that is more helpful, to make use of the charity, or to close the otherwise moribund charity;
- linked to the above, and in liaison with SMDC (which undertakes the upkeep of the recreational ground), providing further facilities at, and making more use of, Ball Haye Green;
- pursuing the long-standing policy of the Friends of the Nicholson Memorial to upgrade it to Grade 1 listing, or perhaps just II* - Grade II is defined as a site of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve [it], Grade II* buildings are particularly important...of more than special interest, Grade I are of “exceptional interest”. Leek currently has one grade I (All Saints church), four grade II* (Abbey Inn, Greystones, Nicholson Institute, St Edwards church). Among the grade II listed buildings are the Nicholson Memorial, and the memorial in St Edwards churchyard – plus the Merryton Moor memorial

12 VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

It was agreed that, at some point, we might

- encouraging the re-establishment of the Friends of the Nicholson Memorial,
- or alternatively initiating a Friends of Leek War Memorials (to include the three Leek Council memorials plus Birch Gardens),
- plus inviting groups, particularly service cadets, to help in enhancing, or to raise money to enhance, the memorials and their environs.