

**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 10 February 2016**

**Subject: Commemorating the First World War: Somme 2016**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes All	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 marks the centenary of the first day of the Battle of the Somme. It has a global, national and local significance. The first day had a very particular significance to Leeds as the city's volunteer battalion, the Leeds Pals sent 750 men over the top, with only 72 unscathed or with minor injuries at nightfall. The Battle of the Somme led to the worst losses of British Army personnel during the First World War.
2. A national commemoration programme has been led by the department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The three major national commemorative events are the start of the war (4<sup>th</sup> August 2014), the Battle of the Somme (1<sup>st</sup> July 2016) and Armistice Day (11 November 2018). In August 2016 the national commemoration includes a commemorative event at the Thiepval memorial in France, all-night vigils held around the country, and a national service of commemoration at Manchester Cathedral. It is hoped that the Lord Mayor will be attending a commemorative event on the evening of 30 June in Bus-les-Artois.
3. An earlier Executive Board report dated 16 July 2014 outlined the city's programme of events to mark the centenary of the First World War. Exhibitions and events led by Leeds Museums and Galleries and Leeds Library and Information Service have covered a wide range of topics, and officers have supported a range of events. The strength of this approach has been to enable communities and groups to commemorate the events in diverse ways most appropriate to themselves - the

result has been a programme with a strong focus on community involvement, inclusion, diversity and an intergenerational approach.

4. This report serves to continue to keep Executive Board engaged with regard to the programme of activity in light of the approach of the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in July.

### **Recommendations**

5. Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this report and approve the approach of adding to the national commemorations through a range of city-wide and local activity.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

1.1 To recognise and promote the commemoration of the Battle of the Somme, and the involvement of the Leeds Pals

1.2 To highlight the planned programme of activity in the city.

## **2 Background information**

2.1 As Members will be aware World War One had a far reaching impact on the city of Leeds. In particular;

- By the end of the war 82,000 Leeds men had been recruited;
- Almost 10,000 Leeds citizens were killed during the First World War. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme in France in 1916 it said every street in Leeds lost one man;
- By the Spring of 1915 10,000 women had joined up to do benevolent work;
- Leeds was one of the major industrial centres of war work, with several munitions factories, including over 16,000 employed at Barnbow, 93% of which were women and girls.

2.2 On the first day of the Battle of the Somme in France in 1916 it is said that every street in Leeds lost one man. Soldiers from Leeds from a number of units took part on the day. In particular, the Leeds Pals battalion was hit especially hard. The Pals battalions were specially constituted battalions of the British Army comprising men who had enlisted together in local recruiting drives, with the promise that they would be able to serve alongside their friends, neighbours and colleagues ("pals"), rather than being arbitrarily allocated to battalions. When the battalion was taken over by the British Army it was officially named the 15th Battalion (1st Leeds), The Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment). The battalion was formed in September 1914 and underwent training at Colsterdale in the Yorkshire Dales. It became part of the 93rd Brigade of the 31st Division, along with the two Bradford Pals battalions (16th and 18th Battalions, The West Yorkshire Regiment). On the first day on the Somme, 1 July 1916, the 31st Division attacked towards the village of Serre and the Leeds Pals advanced from a line of copses named after the Gospels. The battalion was shelled in its trenches before Zero Hour (7.30 am) and when it advanced, it was met by heavy machine gun fire. A few men got as far as the German barbed wire but no further. Later in the morning the German defenders came out to clear the bodies off their wire, killing any that were still alive. The battalion casualties, sustained in the few minutes after Zero, were 24 officers and 504 other ranks, of which 15 officers and 233 other ranks were killed. The Leeds Pals' official memorial is in Colsterdale, North Yorkshire.

2.3 Elsewhere on the day, units of the Leeds Rifles took part in action which led to Corporal George Sanders being awarded the Victoria Cross.

- 2.4 In 2006, Leeds City Council installed two war memorials, one in Belgium to commemorate the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and the other in France to commemorate the Leeds Pals.
- 2.5 The Council recently received a petition from three Year 11 History students studying at Abbey Grange Academy, observing that the current memorial in France should be replaced with a more prominent one, to properly reflect the significance of the Pals to Leeds.
- 2.6 These sites were inspected in 2015 and found to be generally well maintained by each respective local authority.
- 2.7 Whilst the memorials are well maintained, there is an opportunity to improve the interpretation currently in place at Bus-les-Artois. A new interpretation panel has been designed to replace the current panel. The panel will mirror the signage that is currently at the site but will incorporate a French and English translation. This panel will be placed on or nearby the memorial and the Lord Mayor of Leeds has been asked to attend a ceremony on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to unveil the panel.
- 2.8 In recognition of the impact of WW1 on the citizens of Leeds, a programme of events and activities commenced in 2014. Exhibitions and events led by Leeds Museums & Galleries and Leeds Libraries & Information Services have so far covered a wide range of themes, including: hospitals, industry, literature, peace, the role of women, the home front, the effect of war on young people, LGBT war experiences, BAME war experiences, and art and the First World War. There is long term collaboration with the University of Leeds, which runs the 'Legacies of War' programme. Many organisations and cultural partners in the city have also run their own significant programmes, for example the Royal Armouries, the Thackray Museum, Leeds Grand Theatre, Leeds Minster, Morley Town, Horsforth in WW1, St John's Church, Meanwood Village Association and many more.
- 2.9 A new book 'Great War Britain: Leeds' has been written by two of our Museum curators Lucy Moore and Nicola Pullan. It examines Leeds during the First World War. It is published by the History Press and available from our Museum sites and from all reputable booksellers.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Anniversary of the Somme has particular significance for the Leeds Pals. In preparation the following events have been brought forward by the Council to mark the commemoration in 2016:
- An evening concert on 30<sup>th</sup> June at Leeds Town Hall which will feature a performance of 'The Armed Man' - a work by composer Karl Jenkins which was originally premiered at Leeds Town Hall. It will be performed by the Manchester Camerata, the Leeds Festival Chorus and the Philharmonic Chorus. The Town Hall event will be complemented by various and activities supported by Libraries and Museums teams which will mean it will be significantly more than the concert itself. It is anticipated that this concert will mark the main Civic commemoration.

- An exhibition looking at Leeds during WW1 will opening at Leeds City Museum on 30<sup>th</sup> June. It is curated by young people from around the city, supported by museum staff.
- Services led by Parks and Countryside are working to together to support a community led event in Meanwood Park on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016.
- The Carriageworks Theatre have programmed a new play 'Leeds Lads', produced by Red Ladder Theatre and written by Anthony Clavane, about three Leeds Pals, and their descendants.
- Officers are also aware of several community-led events and activities already organised. It is expected that other community-led events will be organised closer to the time.
- West Yorkshire Playhouse has commissioned a play by Leeds Playwright Alice Nutter which looks at the story of the 'Barnbow Lasses' and the explosion in the Barnbow munitions factory which in 1916 caused the greatest single loss of life in the City during World War One. It will run at the Playhouse at the time of the commemoration.

3.2 The combination of the array of events organised by the Council and by local groups has been a real strength. The proposal is to mark the actions of the Leeds Pals Battalions across the city by employing buglers to play an appropriate piece to mark the point in time at which men went over the top, at 7.30am on 1<sup>st</sup> July. These buglers would be in prominent positions in the city, with at least one in each community committee area, the exact location to be determined by the committee. Committees will be invited to look to support these significant moments with events that they feel most appropriate to their communities.

3.3 The proposal would also include the production of publicity letting people know about all the events associated with the Battle of the Somme around the city.

3.4 Subject to Member agreement it is proposed that this additional programme can be delivered within a budget of £20,000. Half of this will be earmarked to provide support of c£1k for each community committee area. Officers working on the programme will be visiting each community committee area in the coming months to make them aware of the proposals and to discuss how they can take part and make use of the funding.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Discussions have taken place between service areas within the council and in consultation with city-wide cultural and heritage partners. Ongoing discussions will take place with Community Committees, the Leeds Faiths Forum and the Armed Forces Group during development of this programme.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening was produced in May 2014 as plans for the project were being developed and this is attached as an appendix.

4.2.2 Jogendra Sen, originally from Bengal in India, served with the Leeds Pals and although he died prior to 1<sup>st</sup> July, Leeds Museums and Galleries hope to show his personal effects to illustrate diversity in the armed forces in the city at the time, and show the significance of the war to a wide range of the city's present-day communities. We have been consulting with South Asian Arts-UK and the Council for Hindu Members of the Armed Forces as part of this process.

## **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The programme encourages people to engage with our cultural offer and to raise the profile of the city. Specifically, it delivers the Best Council Plan priority of maximising the city's cultural impact.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The programme of activities described above is funded within current budgets and the proposals above recommend that the additional element of support is directed at a local level through community committees.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.2 There are no legal implications in this report.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 The First World War is an emotive subject for a wide variety of people and needs to be handled sensitively. There is an expectation that the first day of the Somme will be marked appropriately.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 As part of the WW1 commemoration programme, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme is a very important landmark for the city. In this context the programme proposed affords a range of opportunities for people to commemorate the mark the anniversary. The buglers are an inspiring way to show the depth of emotion right across the city and will hopefully encourage people to visit local and city-wide events and exhibitions and to explore their own unique histories within their communities.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Executive Board is asked to note the contents of this report and approve the approach of adding to the national commemorations through a range of city-wide and local activity.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.