

# Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review

## The Council's Policy on Maintenance of War Memorials



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# AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL ON WAR MEMORIALS

## FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Panel Members:**

Councillor David Sheard

Councillor David Woodhead

Councillor Derrick Yates

Councillor Roger Roberts

Mr Colin Gower – Voluntary Scrutiny Co-optee

## **1. Background**

1.1 A request for scrutiny into the council's policy on war memorials was submitted by Cllr Sheard, following meetings with representatives of Culture and Leisure Services, the local British Legion and a "War Graves" volunteer, and highlighted two main concerns:

the lack of a clear policy for how the council should react to requests for additional names to be added to war memorials

the lack of sufficient budget to maintain or improve security on memorials

1.2 An Ad Hoc panel was set up to review the current approaches used in Kirklees to maintain and update war memorials.

This included consideration of:

What, in this context, constitutes a war memorial

What are the duties placed upon the authority regarding the upkeep of war memorials

What budgetary constraints/ needs are there

How effective is the current approach

How sustainable is the current approach

What is/ should be the policy regarding additional names

What can external agencies do/ are doing

1.3 As the work of the panel progressed it became clear that a further issue to be considered was that of an electronic archive of all memorials in the area, for educational and research purposes.

## **2. Methodology**

2.1 Information was gathered from a number of sources, including members of ex-services organisations (e.g. Royal British Legion), Parish Councils, Church and community groups, Museums Service and interested individuals. The panel attracted good press coverage following its first meeting, and this led to further information being received.

2.2 The panel heard from a number of people including:

John Fletcher, Assistant Head of Service, Culture and Leisure Services

Bob Mortimer, Royal British Legion

Bob Scaife, RAFA

Dr John Rumsby, formerly of Kirklees Museums Service and also founder member of Huddersfield Military History Society.

### 3. Evidence

3.1 Legislation covering the duties, powers and obligations of Local Authorities in regard to war memorials dates back to the War Memorials (Local Authority Powers) Act, 1923, as amended by the Local Authorities Act, 1948 and the Parish Councils Act, 1957. The legislation is enabling rather than proscriptive, in that it gives local authorities powers to maintain war memorials but places no obligation on them to do so.

In Kirklees, as elsewhere, there are many memorials which are not maintained by the council. Some are in local churches. Others were erected in workplaces. Town and Parish Councils also undertake to maintain some memorials in their area. Sadly, others have been lost over time.

Conversely, where the local authority has taken over the maintenance of a graveyard following the deconsecration of a church, it may well inherit the duty of care of a memorial therein.

3.2 There is an issue within Kirklees whereby guidance is required on what names should be included on a war memorial, and indeed what actually constitutes a war memorial. The National Inventory of War Memorials uses the following definition of a war memorial and who should be included:

*“any physical object erected or installed to commemorate those killed as a result of conflict or military service should be regarded as a war memorial. Memorials to civilians should be included. Most, but not all memorials, relate to the First and Second World Wars.”*

This definition is deliberately broad, and includes such things as plaques, stained glass windows and paintings, as well as larger “cenotaph”-type constructions.

3.3 Most of the memorials in the care of Kirklees Council are typically, but not exclusively, situated in parks or town centres.

Currently, approximately £15,000pa is spent on maintaining memorials at their current level, although this is done on a responsive basis in the main. More resources are needed to create routine cleaning, improved surrounds, disabled access (particularly for veterans), pavement levelling, improved security needed as a result of increased vandalism, and, in the case of Greenhead Park, subsidence.

3.4 Both World Wars are now included in the National Curriculum. This has created a raised level of interest amongst schools with regard to both war memorials and also those individuals mentioned on them. Additionally, the increase in amateur genealogy has resulted in many enquiries for details of possible ancestors involved in conflicts. Currently, the council has a local inventory of war memorials in paper form, put together by Dr Rumsby, but no electronic record other than a brief list of locations on the Council website: (<http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/answers/deathandbereavement/warmemorials.shtml>).

John Fletcher judged that an additional £25,000pa over the next 10 years would allow for a programme of works to upgrade and safeguard the memorials. This is based on current costs of upkeep and assessment of both the existing state of the memorials and requirements for improvements under such statute law as the Disability Discrimination Act. This is based on the current list of memorials within the care of Kirklees Council.

3.5 Any additional memorials would clearly require additional funding. During the course of the evidence gathering, Councillor Sheard made a request to the press to invite the public to let Kirklees Council know of any other memorials which may need to be maintained. This resulted in a number of people contacting us, although most of the memorials they mentioned were actually already on the national war memorials inventory (<http://www.ukniwm.org.uk/>).

There are some where responsibility for maintenance is unknown or unclear. This is particularly the case where workplace memorials exist in old mill buildings. Some of these memorials, typically made of bronze, are under threat from theft due to the recent worldwide increase in value of scrap metals. There is a danger that if these memorials are not fully recorded in some way then their details will be lost forever.

#### **4. Findings**

4.1 The panel agreed that it was important to set up an online database recording all known war memorials in the Kirklees area. However, it is important that any resource fulfils certain criteria:

It needs to be updateable

It needs to include photographs of all memorials

It needs to include a searchable “names” database containing the names of all those who are mentioned on war memorials, with details of location etc. for family research purposes

4.2 The Panel feel this is a useful record not only for the maintenance of the memorials, but as a tool for genealogists and family historians, and also an educational resource.

The panel discussed this and felt that with the cost of maintaining the web-based resource £30,000pa would be a more appropriate additional allocation request.

4.3 It needs to be determined which Kirklees service would be responsible for creating and maintaining the website, but it could be funded from the additional allocation. The panel would like to see a target set of having the website in place by the end of 2008 with all data input and photographic images uploaded. They also proposed to reconvene in October to review progress.

4.4 The resource, once available, should be publicized via a variety of media including local press, the council's existing website, schools' bulletins and ex-services organisations.

**Recommendation 1:** That £30,000pa be ring-fenced within the Kirklees Council Budget for;

- a) A programme of improvements and ongoing maintenance of war memorials within the care of the Council.
- b) To facilitate the creation and maintenance of a web-based resource detailing those memorials and including photographic records and a database of all names included on memorials. This funding to be in addition to funds already being used to maintain and repair memorials.

**Recommendation 2:** The most appropriate definition of who should appear on a war memorial is that used by the National Inventory of War Memorials, and this definition should also be used by Kirklees Council. Where there is uncertainty, advice should be sought from the Royal British Legion.

**Recommendation 3:** That the Authority set up an online database recording all known war memorials in the Kirklees area and the names of those on the said memorials. The database is to be searchable.

**Recommendation 4:** That in the case of a memorial which is not currently maintained by the council, it should be recorded and included on the database, but the task of physically upkeeping it should not be taken on.

**Recommendation 5:** That the panel reconvene in October to review progress.

## Action Plan

Recommendation	Responsibility	Agreed (yes/no/ already happening /further work needed)	Proposed actions	Estimated completion date
<p>That £30,000pa be ring-fenced within the Kirklees Council Budget for;</p> <p>a) A programme of improvements and ongoing maintenance of war memorials within the care of the Council.</p> <p>b) To facilitate the creation and maintenance of a web-based resource detailing those memorials and including photographic records and a database of all names included on memorials.</p> <p>This funding to be in addition to funds already being used to maintain and repair memorials.</p>	Various	Amount approved in budget bid March 2008		Complete
<p>The most appropriate definition of who should appear on a war memorial is that used by the National Inventory of War Memorials, and this definition should also be used by Kirklees Council. Where there is uncertainty, advice should be sought from the Royal British Legion.</p>	John Fletcher	Yes	This is ongoing. Advice sought by John Fletcher from appropriate Legion members dependent on location/ type of monument	ongoing
<p>That the Authority set up an online database recording all known war memorials in the Kirklees area and the names of those on the said memorials. The database is to be searchable.</p>	John Fletcher		Being undertaken in-house following consultation with Cllr Sheard.	December 2008
<p>That in the case of a memorial which is not currently maintained by the council, it should be recorded and included on the database, but the task of physically upkeeping it should not be taken on.</p>	John Fletcher		Agreed & Implemented by service.	
<p>That the panel reconvene in October '08 to review progress.</p>	OSMC	Yes		October 2008



Cllr Molly Walton  
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Dear Councillor Walton

**Report of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel on the Council's policy on the maintenance of War Memorials**

Further to your letter I am writing to confirm that I accept the recommendations in the report that has been prepared by the panel.

Culture and Leisure are currently collating details from war memorials and are in the process of specifying the requirements for the web site. Once the project has been set-up, the maintenance of the information will be dealt with by our archives service. Having spoken to John Fletcher, he is confident that progress will be able to be reported to the panel on their proposed re-convening in October of this year.

Yours sincerely

Liz E Smaje