

CABINET

Lancaster Town Hall Centenary

17th February 2009

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To advise Cabinet of options for marking the centenary of the opening of Lancaster Town Hall in 1909.			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Referral from Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
This report is public			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That Cabinet consider the options for marking the centenary of the opening of Lancaster Town Hall and authorise arrangements to be made accordingly.
- (2) That subject to the above the Head of Financial Services be authorised to update the General Fund Revenue Account in 2008/09 and 2009/10 as appropriate.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Lancaster Town Hall was officially opened on 27th December 1909 and will therefore be 100 years old later this year.

1.2 Some research has been undertaken which has uncovered the following programme of events which were held to celebrate its opening:

- Procession lead by Lord Ashton, the Mayor and Town Clerk from the Old Town Hall in Market Square to the new Town Hall
- Lord Ashton opened the doors with a golden Key and the procession continued to the Ashton Hall
- A music recital was held in Ashton Hall with Lord Ashton making a speech dedicating the building to the service of the Mayor and the Corporation
- A choral performance of the Messiah was held in the evening
- A Ball was held in aid of the Mayor's Charity
- Children's Party held the following evening
- A football match was held with proceeds going to the Mayor's Charity
- Commemorative coins were struck
- A series of 9 open days were held during January 1910 where all householders and a guest were invited to the Town Hall to see the facilities it had on offer, and they were given refreshments.

- 1.3 There are also a number of other key anniversaries in the District in 2009 – notably the Ashton Memorial is also 100 years old and the Cathedral is 150 years old.

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 It had initially been hoped that the City Council would be in a position to make suitable arrangements to celebrate this anniversary and to this end officers have been in discussions with other local organisations through the Lancaster Heritage Group.

- 2.2 The deteriorating financial position has however caused a 're-think' and officers have instead concentrated on ways of marking the anniversary using existing resources.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 3.1 Officers in Cultural Services, Democratic Services, Economic Development and Tourism and Property Services have worked together to develop the following options which can be delivered within existing resources as indicated:

3.2 Town Hall Tours

It is suggested that a series of enhanced tours of the Town Hall are arranged as part of the Heritage Open Day Tours on 12th/13th September and over the weekend of 25th/26th/27th September 2009 to coincide with the Lancaster Unlocked promotion being organised by the Heritage Group where events at museums and places of interest in the town are specially marketed and promoted for a particular weekend.

The intention is to widen the scope of the tours of this weekend to introduce an historical interpretation using an actor to play the role of Lord Ashton who will lead the tours as if he is showing members of the public around his new building, culminating in refreshments in the Mayors Parlour with the Mayor. A second actor playing the role of Mr Belcher, the Ashton Memorial Architect could also be used to tie in the celebration of 100 years of the Ashton Memorial in Williamson Park.

Charges are made for Town Hall Tours which cover the cost of opening the building. Funding for the additional costs of hiring a 'Lord Ashton' would need to be identified and refreshments could be provided from the Mayoral Functions budget. Savings can be made on events within the Civic programme to provide additional funding for this purpose, eg. reductions in numbers invited to the Annual Council Mayor Making Lunch.

3.3 Guided Walks

A local blue badge guide could also be employed to lead Edwardian Lancaster (or 'Lord Ashton's Lancaster') themed guided walks on at least some of the Heritage open days & Lancaster Unlocked days referred to above.

Funding for the cost of these would also need to be identified.

3.4 Mayoral At Homes

The Mayoral At Homes event have previously taken place in May each year. However this year they have been moved for the first time and are due to be held in March 2009. If during 2009/10, these are held in January 2010 instead the At Home in Lancaster can be promoted to the public as replicating the open days held in

January 1910 and a similar acted scenario using a Lord Ashton and Mr Belcher could be included.

Funding for the additional costs of staging the scenario would need to be identified. There would be no additional costs for refreshments other than those budgeted for on an annual basis.

3.5 Lancaster Fireworks Festival

It is suggested that the Fireworks in November 2009 be arranged around an Edwardian Theme, both during the day and in respect of the music in the evening.

Subject to approval of the proposed Festival programme, funding for this is included in the Cultural Services budget – there would be no additional costs.

3.6 Community Festival – Williamson Park

Subject to further approval of the 2009/10 budget process, a sum of £7,500 is provisionally allocated for holding events in the Park. This could be used to hold an Edwardian themed Fair in the Park, possibly alongside the Community Festival held for the past few years in which the Council participated for the first time in 2008. This would enable the public to look at Lancaster as it was 100 years ago alongside the Lancaster of today.

3.7 Community Leaders Event/Choral Concert

If funding can be identified, a community event could be organised in the Ashton Hall during December to be hosted by the Mayor. The Lancaster and District Male Voice Choir are interested in performing a concert with the support of Leyland Brass Band who are willing to provide the music for them. This choir performed a concert in the Ashton Hall 100 years ago and were the first public performance in the room. This could be arranged as a separate concert or as part of a Community Leaders Event.

Interest has also been expressed by the NCBI in Lancaster who have recently done a new Welcome poster for the Town Hall steps and it is suggested that the promotion of this could be timed and themed to mark the centenary.

Costs of organising a Community Leaders Event could be met from the as yet unallocated 2008/09 Area Based Grant Reserve for Community Cohesion. A separate concert would need to be a ticketed event and self financing.

3.8 Cabinet are requested to consider whether they wish to pursue any or all of the above options. Alternatively Cabinet may agree not to make any arrangements to mark the centenary of Lancaster Town Hall or the Ashton Memorial.

4.0 Officer Preferred Option

4.1 There are no officer preferred options.

5.0 Details of Consultation

5.1 Officers from several Services have liaised with other organisations through the Lancaster Heritage Group and the proposals outlined in this report meet with their approval and fit the programme of Edwardian themed events being considered by others.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Initial enquiries have been made to check availability of a suitable Lord Ashton 'look-alike' and provisional bookings made. No firm commitments have yet been made, but in order to secure the necessary bookings for any of the options set out above, action is required at an early date. Members are requested to consider the options set out above and to confirm the provision of the necessary funding in order that arrangements can be commenced in earnest and appropriate events organised.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The proposal to deliver a civic programme which celebrates our local heritage and benefits our communities, with specific reference to the centenaries of Lancaster Town Hall and Williamson Park is included as part of Priority Outcome 16 in the 2008/09 Corporate Plan - to work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Precise costings of the options set out in the report have not been undertaken by the relevant Services and although provisional enquiries have been made regarding the availability of historical interpreters and walks guides no financial commitment has been entered into. Estimates of the costs involved suggest that the provision of the suggested role playing characters with costumes and props and the guided walks in 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 above would cost approximately £2,000.

The following potential sources of funding have been identified. However, should the allocation of these be confirmed for this purpose, detailed proposals will be worked up to meet the available funding:

- A proposal to allocate £2,500 to a Williamson Park Local Music Programme and £5,000 to a Williamson Park Christmas Event from the Festivals Innovation Fund for 2009/10 has been referred for further consideration as part of the budget process, but if approved could be utilised for an appropriate Ashton Memorial centenary celebratory event in Williamson Park.
- Savings could be made to other events in the 2009/10 Civic Programme, reducing the guest list at Annual Council for example as a one-off specifically to support additional expenditure on refreshments at Town Hall Tours
- A sum could be set aside from the 2008/09 £26,000 Community Cohesion Area Based Grant Reserve (currently unallocated).

Any reference made to festivals budgets is subject to the outcome of 2009/10 budget process in accordance with the decision of Cabinet on Festivals and Events dated 9th December 2008.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Gillian Noall
Telephone: 01524 582060
E-mail: gnoall@lancaster.gov.uk
Ref: