



## **AGENDA ITEM: 5(d)**

**CABINET: 15 September 2015**

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<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Assistant Director Planning</b>
<b>Relevant Managing Director:</b>	<b>Managing Director (Transformation)</b>
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>Councillor J Hodson</b>
<b>Contact for further information:</b>	<b>Ian Bond (Extn. 5167) (e-mail: <a href="mailto:ian.bond@westlancs.gov.uk">ian.bond@westlancs.gov.uk</a>)</b>

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**SUBJECT: COMMEMORATION OF FORMER ORMSKIRK RESIDENT WILLIAM HEATON VC WHO RECEIVED A VICTORIA CROSS DURING THE BOER WAR**

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Wards affected: Derby and Knowsley wards Ormskirk

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To agree upon on the most appropriate way to commemorate the bravery of William Heaton who was the recipient of a Victoria Cross in the Boer War.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That a commemorative plaque in honour of William Heaton be erected within Victoria Park, Ormskirk in accordance with the design description referred to in paragraph 5.6 of this report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet indicate whether they prefer location A or location B, referred to at paragraph 5.5 of this report, for the siting of the plaque.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director Planning in consultation with the Assistant Director Community Services, implement the works arising pursuant to recommendation 2.1 and 2.2 above.
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### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In June we received a request from a local historian to consider how the Council might commemorate the life of William Heaton, a former Ormskirk resident, who received a Victoria Cross for his extreme bravery in the Boer War in 1900.
- 3.2 Whilst this is a somewhat unusual request I felt that it was important to undertake and collate further research on the matter and asked the Heritage and Environment Manager to consider the request and come up with an appropriate proposal for Members to consider.

### **4.0 HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

- 4.1 William Edward Heaton was born on the 2nd of January 1875, and baptised at Ormskirk Parish Church. Whilst born in Bickerstaffe In 1891 he is recorded as living at No.3 Court 17, Aughton Street, Ormskirk, in an area of the town centre which is now occupied by the Market Way Car Park.
- 4.2 In the Boer War William served with the 1st Battalion Kings Liverpool Regiment. His Battalion took part in operations leading to the relief of Ladysmith, and in the advance north through eastern Transvaal.
- 4.3 On the 23rd of August 1900 two companies of the Liverpool Regiment went forward to assist the British Cavalry. However on a ridge facing the main Boer positions at Geluk Farm, they pushed too far forwards without support and had to take up defensive positions under heavy fire. After suffering serious casualties and in being in danger of being overrun Private Heaton volunteered to take a message to explain their desperate situation at significant risk to his own life. Had it not been for the courage of William Heaton, the remainder of his company would most likely have been killed.
- 4.4 William was later promoted to Corporal and for his bravery he received his Victoria Cross medal from the Duke of York (later crowned King George V) at Pietermaritzburg on the 14th of August 1901. The Victoria Cross is a military decoration awarded 'for valour in the face of the enemy' and is the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry. His Victoria Cross was one of only 78 awarded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War campaign from October 1899 to May 1902.
- 4.5 William died on the 5th of June 1941, aged 65, and was buried with full military honours at Ormskirk Parish Church.
- 4.6 Being awarded a VC is a very rare honour for service personnel and from research to date William Heaton is the only person with associations with West Lancashire to be awarded a VC. William's medals including his Victoria Cross are currently on display at the Liverpool Museum.

## **5.0 PROPOSED ACTION**

- 5.1 I am satisfied, that it would be appropriate to commemorate William Heaton's achievement of receiving a Victoria Cross.
- 5.2 The Council however does not have an existing scheme in place which would guide our approach in such matters. Whilst the Government operates a scheme for commemorating people who received the Victoria Cross in the First World War this does not extend to other conflicts and would not apply in this particular case.
- 5.3 The option of placing a plaque at his former house/home is not available and I do not consider there is an appropriate location within the immediate area of his former address at the rear of Aughton Street (Market Way) which would reflect the importance of the matter.
- 5.4 As William survived both the 2<sup>nd</sup> Boer War and WW1, in which he also served, we cannot commemorate his life on the existing war memorials in Coronation Park and Victoria Park in Ormskirk. However given that his act of bravery, and reason for his VC medal, relate to the Boer War, a location within Victoria Park provides some context to his deeds and is in my view the most appropriate option.
- 5.5 As the Boer War memorial itself is a 'Listed' structure great care needs to be given to preserving the memorial and its immediate setting. In this respect as above ground and competing structures would not be appropriate it is proposed that we provide a carved stone (sand stone or granite) plaque within the park close to the existing Boer War Memorial. A suitable location can be found either within the path leading up to the memorial or to the side in an existing mown grassed area (see attached Appendix B for details). In respect to the latter a low stone plinth (300-400mm) would be provided for the plaque to help raise it above grass level.
- 5.6 I propose that the design of the plaque, subject to agreement, would be 300mm square with the simple carved inscription i.e. name, date of birth and the date of receiving the VC and including a carved Victoria Cross at its centre based on the one used by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (see Appendix B for details).

## **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The cost of producing a bespoke designed, ground mounted, stone plaque including fixing is estimated at £500 - £700. An above ground option including an upstanding stone base would increase the cost to approximately £800 - £1000.
- 7.2 The cost of the works can be met from existing budgets.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

### **Appendices**

- A – Location plan for commemoration plaque.
- B – Proposed plaque and locations.