

## **First World War Commemorations**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This report updates Members on the Government's plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War and how the LGA is supporting councils to coordinate local commemorations.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to note the update on national and local plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

### **Action**

To be taken forward by Officers, as directed by Members.

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## **First World War Commemorations**

### **Background**

1. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is leading the Government's preparations to mark the centenary of the First World War, 2014 - 2018. The Prime Minister has also appointed a Special Representative for the Centenary Commemoration, Dr. Andrew Murrison MP.
2. Last year, Councillor Flick Rea MBE met Dr. Murrison to discuss the many different ways councils will support national and local commemorations through schools, museums, archives, local heritage and libraries. In particular, they discussed how councils including Liverpool, Preston and North East Lincolnshire continue to organise commemorations and activities based upon local Pals battalions. Cllr Rea's subsequent letter to Maria Miller MP is attached at **Annex A** and she recently met Diane Lees, Director-General of the Imperial War Museum (IWM). The IWM works closely with local regimental museums and is coordinating a local, regional and national network of not-for-profit organisations involved in the commemorations.

### **The Government's Plans**

3. The Government has recently announced that the centenary will be commemorated by a four-year programme of national acts of remembrance, UK-wide cultural initiatives and educational opportunities.
4. The opening day of the centenary on 4 August 2014 will focus on three events:
  - 4.1. a wreath-laying service at Glasgow's Cenotaph following the special service for Commonwealth leaders at Glasgow Cathedral
  - 4.2. an event at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission St Symphorien Military Cemetery in Mons, Belgium – which has an equal number of British and German soldiers, and is where the first and last Commonwealth casualties of the war are believed to be buried
  - 4.3. a candlelit vigil of prayer and penitence at Westminster Abbey finishing at 11pm – the moment war was declared
5. The centrepiece of the commemorations will be the reopening of the IWM London following the £35 million refurbishment of the First World War galleries. The IWM London was founded in 1917 to record the then still-continuing conflict.
6. Other activities in the four-year programme include:

- 6.1. National acts of remembrance to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme (2016) and Armistice Day (2018).
- 6.2. An enduring educational legacy funded with £5.3 million from the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government, which will allow two student ambassadors, plus a teacher, from each maintained school in England to visit First World War battlefields and undertake research on people local to their school who fought in the war.
- 6.3. At least £15 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, including a new £6 million community project fund to enable young people working in their communities to conserve, explore and share local heritage of the First World War.
- 6.4. A grant of up to £1 million from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to support HMS Caroline, the last surviving warship from the Battle of Jutland – the ship will have a secure future in Belfast, where thousands of people will be able to visit her and learn about her unique role in the First World War.
- 6.5. Not for profit cultural and educational organisations are encouraged to join the First World War Centenary Partnership, led by IWM. The Partnership is a growing network of over 1,000 local, regional, national and international non-for-profit groups and organisations with plans to commemorate the centenary. Becoming a member of the Partnership is free and provides access to a wealth of First World War expertise, resources and the logo.

### **Local plans**

7. As well as supporting communities to participate in the national commemorations, many councils are involving residents in planning local commemorations that bring communities together to commemorate the local impact of the First World War. For example:
  - 7.1 Nottinghamshire County Council is involving the community in local exhibitions, a specially commissioned play that will tour the county, the restoration of war memorials and the online Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour.
  - 7.2 Hampshire County Council's plans include an exhibition across Community Museums showing the movement of soldiers and equipment through Hampshire in the First World War, an exhibition about the Hampshire Regiment and events based around war poetry, art and music in libraries across Hampshire.
  - 7.3 Sheffield City Council has brought together online resources that enable people to learn about the lives of 24 local men, women and children who were affected by the First World War in different ways and information about local regiments and battalions.

9 July 2013

**Item 6**

- 7.4 Kirklees Council is working with communities to plan activities and events to commemorate those who were affected by the First World War in their own towns and villages.
8. There are a number of funding sources available to support local commemorations, which the LGA is promoting to councils through our monthly e-bulletin. In particular, the Heritage Lottery Fund is offering grants from £3,000 to £100,000 upwards, and councils are able to join the IWM's First World War Centenary Partnership to access a range of digital resources. Latest information is available on the LGA website and is helping councils to draw up their plans.

**Conclusion and next steps**

9. The LGA will continue to promote funding sources to support local commemorative activities.

**Financial Implications**

10. This work can be undertaken within existing resources.