

The Treatment of War Memorials

Contact officer: Ainsley Gilbert
Telephone: 01895 250692
Email: agilbert@hillington.gov.uk

REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee requested a briefing paper to assess whether there was a problem with the way war memorials are treated in the Borough.

INFORMATION

1. There are 69 War Memorials listed in the Hillingdon Gazetteer of War Memorials. However, the majority of these are not in public places. Many are located in schools, or in Churches, and are not generally accessible. There are also a number of graves of UK service personnel in the Borough, notably the 112 ANZAC Hospital graves in Harefield, and some of the Borough's cemeteries also contain war memorials. There are 23 publically accessible War Memorials, of which 11 are located in town or village centres. The focus of this report is on the traditional village or town centre memorials, as these are most likely to suffer from mistreatment, owing to their location.
2. There are numerous reports of vandalism across the country, with deliberate acts of vandalism occurring, as well as other examples of mistreatment. In Hillingdon, however, the Council is aware of only a very small number of reports of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) at or mistreatment of War Memorials.
3. Councillor Carol Melvin has reported that people often misuse the Northwood War Memorial owing to its stepped design and proximity local takeaway shops.
4. Paul Richards, Head of Green Spaces, Sport and Culture, advises that there have been problems with youths loitering in the vicinity of the war memorial at Harefield, however, this had not led to any damage to the War Memorial. There was also a single political protester at the Polish War Memorial, and whilst this might be considered inappropriate, it is not the kind of mistreatment or ASB which members had previously been concerned about. The ASBIT team were aware only of the instances noted by Paul Richards
5. There are undoubtedly other instances of individuals not treating War Memorials in the way which members would hope, however, they have not been reported to the Council. The Council also does a great deal of work supporting remembrance, and highlighting the importance of memorials, for example the recent World War One Book, and the plaques installed at Harefield to honour the two Victoria Cross holders from that village. It is hoped that better knowledge of the purpose of memorials will prevent individuals from acting inappropriately.

RECCOMENDATION

6. That the committee note the report, and decide what action, if any, it wishes to take.