

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Council

20th October 2021

Crawley City Status Bid

Report of the Chief Executive
CEX/56

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Queen is celebrating 70 years on the throne in 2022 which will be her platinum jubilee. To mark this unique occasion the UK Government has launched a number of rare civic competitions including, 'City Status' and 'Lord Mayor or Lord Provost status', for a number of worthy towns and cities located in the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or Overseas Territory. In 2022 Crawley will also be celebrating its 75th anniversary as a New Town.
- 1.2 The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to the preparation and submission of a bid for City Status, for Crawley Borough, as part of the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition.

2. Recommendations

Councillors are asked to consider the content of this report and:

- a) Agree to the preparation and submission of a City Status bid for Crawley Borough as part of the Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition.
- b) That, subject to a), the council commences a community stakeholder consultation exercise, that will run from 21 October 2021 to 18 November 2021.
- c) Delegate the submission of the bid to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that an application for City Status is made in recognition of Crawley's rich heritage, from Anglo Saxon to modern day. Today Crawley is a success story and has grown to be one of the most vibrant and diverse towns in the UK, encapsulating all that is good about post-war Britain. Nearly 75 years ago a New Town was created, we envisage our bid being based around the following message *'75 years ago, you made Crawley a New Town. In that time, we have grown to become a regional powerhouse. Imagine what we can achieve if you made us a New City'*.
- 3.2 Given the significant economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our town which is well documented and evidenced; securing City Status will bring with it prestige, standing and an opportunity to lever investment to aid our recovery.

4 Background

- 4.1 Her Majesty The Queen will be the first British monarch to have reached 70 years on the throne. The Platinum Jubilee celebrations will reflect on Her Majesty's reign, and her impact on the UK and the world since 1952. As part of these celebrations, there will be a civic honours competition. This includes competitions for City Status. Any local authority in any part of the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or an Overseas Territory which considers that its area deserves to be granted the rare honour of City Status is welcome to enter the competition.
- 4.2 Many towns will be submitting bids for City Status and there will be significant competition from towns that have previously submitted multiple bids during the Millennium (2000), Golden Jubilee (2002) and/or Diamond Jubilee (2012) bidding rounds. Whilst we recognise that this is a hugely competitive process, we consider that given the significant impacts of the pandemic on our town, that the process and journey that we embark on in developing our bid submission with our residents, businesses and communities will help rebuild our optimism, ambition and pride. Members will be aware that in nearly every national media interview and coverage about impacts of the pandemic on jobs and the local economy, it was often Crawley that was fronting this impact. We see the bid as an opportunity to celebrate and be proud of our resilience, our people, our businesses and develop the town's potential further.
- 4.3 The bidding guidance seeks a concise overview of the place's distinct identity; civic pride; cultural infrastructure, interesting heritage, history and traditions; vibrant and welcoming community; record of innovation; sound governance and administration; associations with Royalty; and other particularly distinctive features, age, residents or communities who have made widely recognised significant contributions to society and cultural infrastructure. Alongside this it seeks to understand the place through a profile of the resident population of the area, economic activity, public green spaces, sport and leisure facilities and shopping areas, and local authority support for the voluntary sector.
- 4.4 If the recommendation to submit a bid is supported, over the next few weeks, the Council intends to mobilise residents, community groups, business representatives and voluntary organisations to be positively part of the bid process and support a compelling bid for Crawley. This is considered as a key aspect of the bid preparation.
- 4.5 The deadline for submission is 8th December 2021 at 4pm with results to be announced in 2022. The guidance does not state how many places City Status may be awarded to as part of the competition.

5 Why Crawley and what would City Status do for Crawley?

- 5.1 These are important questions to ask ourselves in our bid submission. The reasons are numerous and this will be developed as the bid is written and informed by the community consultation exercise. Some suggested responses include:
- The Queen's Platinum Jubilee also marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment as Crawley as a New Town
 - Crawley was one of the first New Towns to be designated in 1947 following the Second World War. The town has developed during the entire reign of Her Majesty. Crawley was first visited by Princess Elizabeth in 1950, when she was heir to the throne when she officially opened the Manor Royal Industrial Area
 - The importance of Crawley as a recognised and growing vibrant regional, national and international centre for economic, social and cultural activity
 - A successful bid will provide a real opportunity to demonstrate locally, regionally and nationally the ambition that Crawley has to properly fulfil its role as the major urban

centre between the south coast and the capital and in doing so provide significant benefits to local residents

- All the communities which make up Crawley, both historical and more recent, are unique and encapsulate the principles shown by Her Majesty over her reign, such as stability, continuity and civic pride while also embracing change and innovation
- The strong and important role community, faith, voluntary and cultural organisations play in the civic life of Crawley
- That Crawley has an innovative and inventive economy with thousands of small businesses and several companies of national and international renown
- A place of festivals – Crawley Festival, Crawley Pride, Crawley Irish Festival, WORDfest – Festival of words, STEMfest
- The diversity of Crawley, including many people from the Commonwealth of Nations
- The City Status contest provides the opportunity to showcase the civic pride of Crawley, our record of innovation, our thriving, diverse and multi-faith communities and our exciting heritage and history, particularly as the most successful Mark 1 post-war New Town
- Crawley is a key transport hub, home to London Gatwick Airport and for millions their first point of arrival in the UK. It has excellent road, rail, active travel links
- It is an important tourist hub with over 45 million visitors entering the town annually (pre-pandemic). Pre-pandemic our daily population would increase to approx. 300,000 a day
- Crawley is a flourishing hub for sports and growing sporting talent. K2 Crawley remains one of the leading UK leisure centres
- Football League club Crawley Town
- Award-winning parks and gardens
- World Marble Championships
- Many notable people are/have been from Crawley – Gareth Southgate, The Cure, Dame Caroline Haslett, Alan Minter (boxer), Daley Thompson, Dan Walker, Romesh Ranganathan.

5.2 Studies suggest that a successful bid for City Status could bring further investment and employment opportunities. Newly created cities tend to outperform other areas in terms of economic performance through increased investment, increasing population and additional employment opportunities. Others have seen significant economic impact. Since securing City Status Wolverhampton has benefited from £2bn of inward investment, Newport has secured 2,000 new jobs, Sunderland has seen Nike, Nissan and Barclays locate there and Brighton and Hove's tourism spend has increased from around £400m to £700m. Clearly, the country is currently experiencing a different economic climate, and there can be no guarantees that Crawley would receive benefits of this order, but without doubt there would be economic benefits to be gained. The Council believes it would represent a major boost to Crawley's economy and a significant platform for making Crawley an even more attractive destination for businesses and jobs. With 16,000 jobs that have been lost at Gatwick Airport alone during the pandemic, the honorary 'City' title will provide a further stimulus to Crawley's recovery.

5.3 Research has also found that civic pride can be boosted with City Status with additional cultural and creative opportunities. A bid for City Status would certainly raise Crawley's profile, enhancing its reputation and ensuring it is a place that is recognised, helping to put Crawley on the map.

5.4 The definition of a city in the UK is a place which has been granted City Status by the monarch. It is important to recognise that size is not an issue to be declared a city with the smallest city in the UK being St David's in Wales having a population of only 1,600. In the 2012 Diamond Jubilee competition, St. Asaph in Wales was declared a city with a population of 3,355.

- 5.5 City Status would be a fitting accolade to crown Crawley as part of its 75th anniversary. There is very little downside to making a bid, and much potentially to be gained. The bid will provide a foundation to start a wider discussion about the town, and its ambitions for the future. Crawley is now a town that has doubled its population to that originally intended (60,000), and today we have grown the town to the extent of its administrative boundary.

6 Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1 Opportunities for securing City Status recognition are rare. Members could decide not to pursue the preparation and submission of a bid. This would prevent Crawley Borough Council from applying as applications must be made by the relevant Local Authority.

7 Implications

- 7.1 Financial Implications – The Government does not want local authorities to incur any undue expense entering the competition. It is the quality of the contents of the application, taken as a whole, that will be assessed, rather than the standard of presentation. Every effort will be made to minimise financial costs of the bid development through making use of existing events and pieces of work as well as engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders. City Status does not carry a direct financial reward. However, it is recognised as a tool for leveraging investment.
- 7.2 Legal Implications – The decision on the award of City Status is entirely at the discretion of Her Majesty The Queen, and there are no formulaic criteria. Therefore, there are no strict legal criteria to meet, just the preparation of a robust bid that fulfils the criteria as detailed in the weblink as referred in the Background papers.
- 7.3 Officer time and capacity is required to support the development of the bid. As far as possible this will coincide with existing work already underway but may require the reprioritisation of work in order to meet the 8th December deadline.
- 7.4 Consultation – A four-week community consultation exercise is proposed, which will raise awareness of our bid campaign. This will seek to engage residents, businesses, the voluntary sector, faith and political representatives and will help inform our bid submission.
- 7.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications – There are no equality and diversity implications of developing and submitting a bid for City Status. A bid would seek to identify and celebrate the diversity of Crawley's population and its aspiration for an inclusive, thriving city in the future.
- 7.6 Risk Assessment – The primary risks relating to this bid for City Status are:
- Not meeting the deadline – this is being mitigated through the establishment of an Officer Working Group to share the work involved to produce a bid
 - Not getting support – there may be people who wouldn't support Crawley becoming a city. This will need to be considered through the consultation process
 - Not securing City Status – this is a competitive process and a number of other towns have confirmed that they will also be submitting a bid for City Status. Even if the bid were not to be successful, the process of developing a submission for Crawley will provide rich data and further engender civic pride, aiding the town's recovery following the pandemic.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 Entry guidelines and background papers for the Platinum Jubilee Honours Competition can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/platinum-jubilee-civic-honours-competition>

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