HURSTPIERPOINT & SAYERS COMMON
PARISH COUNCIL

# Briefing Note
# Coronavirus Remembrance Stone

## for Council 22 July 2021

**Agenda Item 10**

**Background**

At the Council meeting on 25 March 2021 (Minute: C20/21.119: Commemorating Coronavirus), Members considered a briefing note and proposal from Freeman Brothers Funeral Directors to instal a commemorative plaque and plant daffodils on the Village Garden to mark what will become a national annual day of remembrance on 23 March each year. Some Members were concerned about the location and potential advertising opportunity. The War Memorial/Village Green was considered a more suitable location, and it was:

> **RESOLVED: That the Council AGREES to work with Freeman Brothers Funeral Directors to agree the location and wording on the plaque to commemorate coronavirus deaths.**

Following that meeting the Chairman and Clerk met with representatives of Freeman Brothers on 18 May 2021 to discuss further the proposals for a commemorative stone, which are now set out below for approval.

**Location**

The proposed location for the stone is on the Village Green (War Memorial) slightly in front of the pair of yew trees on the southern boundary. The area under the trees will be cleared by the Parish Council Maintenance Officer initially, and continue as part of the Village Green maintenance programme.

Once the site is cleared Freeman Brothers would arrange for some planting to take place and provide the materials and staff to achieve this. It is their intention is that these would mostly be Spring flowers/bulbs such as daffodils. The planting would take place this Autumn and the clearance work would be completed by this time. Freeman Brothers would review the floral display annually to see if it needed 'topping up' the following Autumn and they would be responsible for any additional planting.

**Design of the Commemorative Stone**

The ideas for the design are not yet finalised but a piece of Horsham Stone from the quarry in Broadbridge Heath has been chosen. It is natural in shape (see picture 1 below), and does not resemble a formal headstone memorial. The stone is a very rough square of approximately 24 inches side to side. It is also 8 inches thick in places, making it very substantial.

The stone will be inset with a plaque of slate (see picture 2 below), which would be longer-lasting and easier to maintain. The tablet will be fixed into the face of the Horsham Stone permanently.

The costs and maintenance of the monument, and the planting of daffodils around it, would be Freeman Brothers' responsibility on an ongoing basis.

**Picture 1 - The Stone**

**Picture 2 -Slate Tablet**

**The Inscription**

Freeman Brothers would like to reassure the Parish Council that they do not intend to use this as a promotional opportunity for themselves, although they would appreciate the opportunity to place a small inscription on the rear of the piece advising that they provided it. They would place a small slate marker stating something such as 'Donated by Freeman Brothers Funeral Directors and installed 23/3/2022'.

Freeman Brothers have supplied two potential designs for the tablet for the Parish Council to choose between. These indicative examples are shown in Annex A and B.

The word cloud design features some of the key words they feel sum up the past several months we have experienced, aiming to highlight both the positive and more challenging aspects of the pandemic. In this case, the tablet would measure 15" wide by 11" high and the letters would vary in size as the drawing indicates.

They have also chosen a quote from Revd. Dr Martin Luther King Jr., which they feel summarises the situation as people move forward, as well as being appropriate to the idea of a stone monument itself. This slate plaque would be slightly smaller, measuring 14" wide by 9" high.

A daffodil motif has been chosen to tie in with the planting of daffodils and the symbolism of the annual day of remembrance. The inscription would be highlighted with a 'wash' of pale grey which Freeman Brothers would regularly re-paint as part of their ongoing maintenance of the memorial.

**Promotion**

Freeman Brothers would talk about this on their social media/other online presences and perhaps look to produce an archive of this process, but this would very much be 'away' from the site of the piece itself.

**Fixing the Monument**

The monument will be fixed by Freeman Brothers' Monumental Mason, who is City and Guilds trained and registered on the Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers, which is administered by our trade body, the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM). They only use equipment and methods which comply with British Standard BS8415 as well as the NAMM Code of Practice.

In simple terms, the monument will be attached by way of a dowel to an underground base. This fixing method does mean a temporary disturbance to the earth around the memorial site, however this is the same as when a headstone is fixed, and the Mason will make good as part of the fixing process.

**Land Owners Permission**

On the Land Registry records the land parcel known as the Village Green appears to be in the ownership of West Sussex County Council and this is being confirmed, so that the appropriate permission can be sought.

**Timescales**

If approved, Freeman Brothers will commence production over the summer with the aim of completion late this year and installation in 2022. An official unveiling could be discussed, for March 2022, to coincide with what we suspect will be the second annual Covid Remembrance Day on 23 March 2022.

**Brighton Bench**

There is also the potential for siting a Brighton style bench on the eastern boundary of the site to allow people to sit and reflect. This would be something Freeman Brothers would be willing to contribute towards if we would like to discuss this further.

**Recommendation**

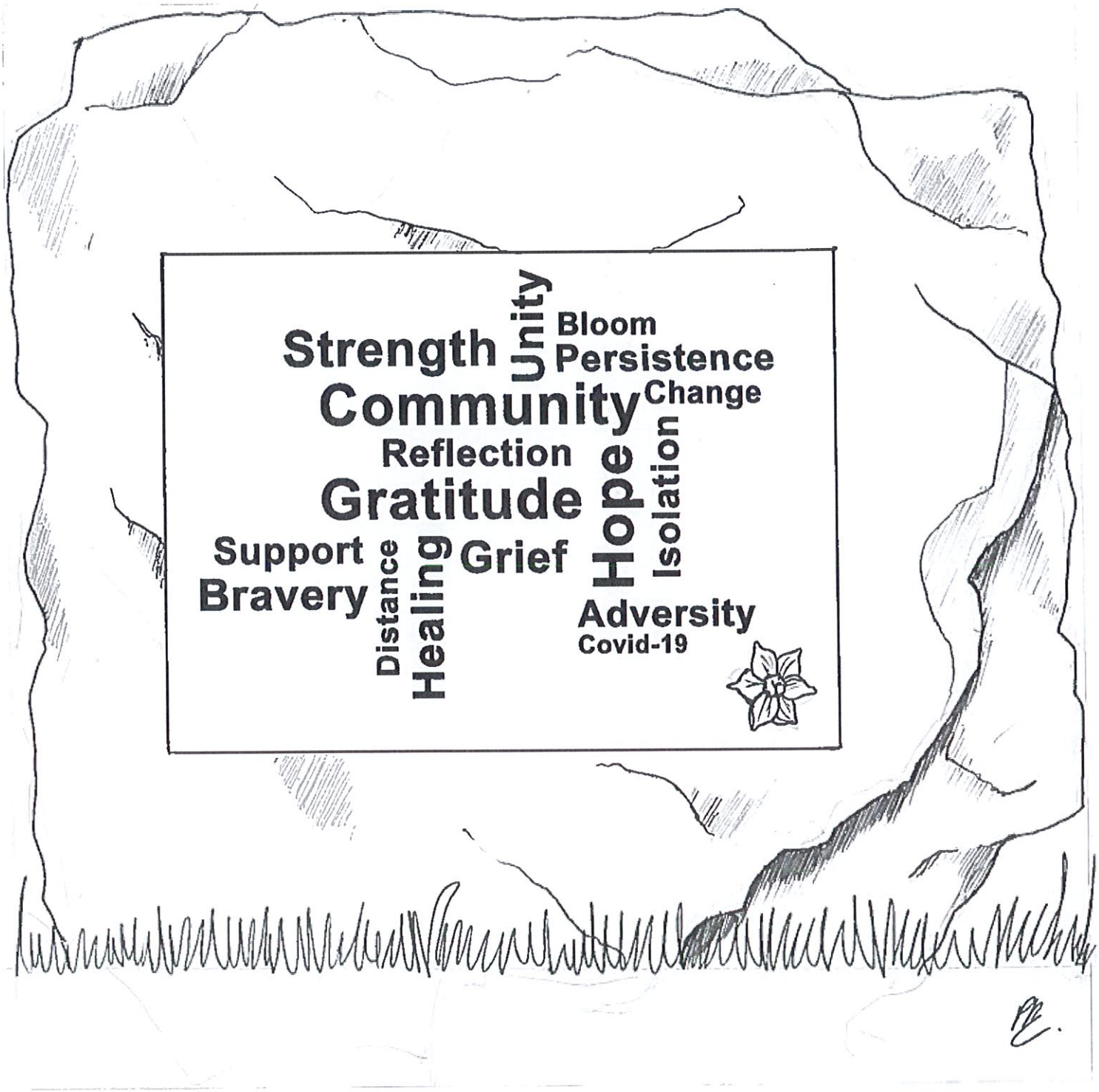
Members are therefore asked to consider the above proposal and approve planting and the design, inscription and placing of the stone, subject to permission from the landowner. It is also recommended that a Brighton style bench is purchased to be included in the project and funding sought to cover the costs associated with the purchase and installation costs of approximately £800.

> **RECOMMENDATION: That Council is asked to AGREE the proposal and approve the planting of Spring bulbs and the design, inscription and placing of the stone on the Village Green, subject to permission from the landowner. It is also recommended that a Brighton style bench is purchased to be included in the project and funding sought to cover the costs associated with the purchase and installation costs of approximately £800.**

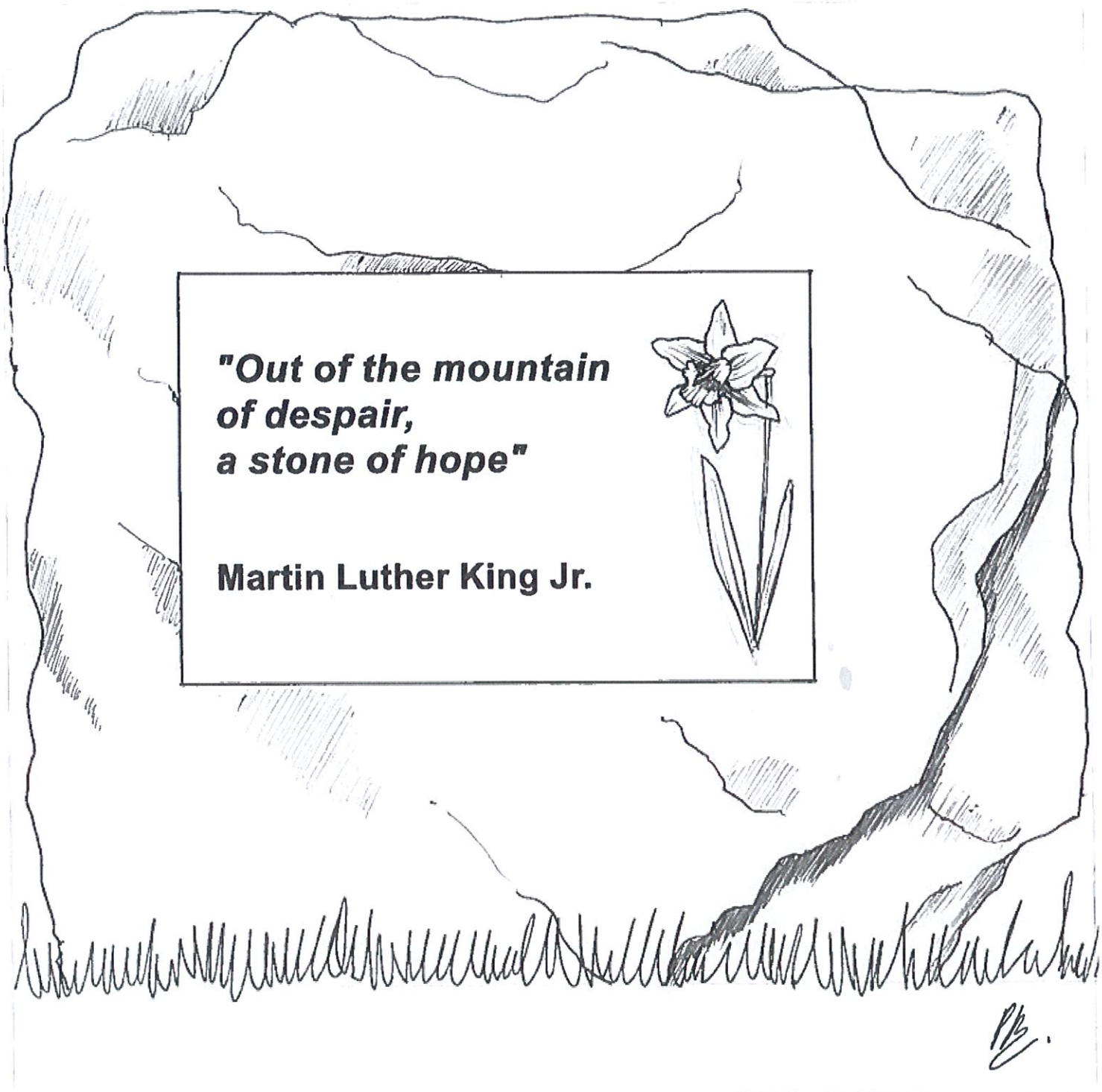
**Annex A – Example Inscription: "Reflection and Hope".**

**Annex B – Example Inscription: Martin Luther King Jr.**

Annex A


Strength
Unity
Bloom
Persistence
Community
Change
Reflection
Hope
Isolation
Gratitude
Support
Bravery
Distance
Healing
Grief
Adversity
Covid-19

Annex B


"Out of the mountain
of despair,
a stone of hope"
Martin Luther King Jr.