

DECISION TAKER: Councillor Neil Cutler

REPORT TITLE: JANE AUSTEN 250 YEAR MEMORIAL STATUE

4 DECEMBER 2023

Contact Officer: Laura Taylor, Chief Executive Email ltaylor@winchester.gov.uk

WARD(S): ST MICHAEL WARD

PURPOSE

2025 marks the 250th year of Jane Austen's birth and presents an opportunity to amplify her legacy in Winchester, highlighting her connections to the house in College Street in which she died and the place she is buried in Winchester Cathedral

The Chapter of Winchester Cathedral wish to install a memorial statue to Jane Austen in the Inner Close. Martin Jennings has been commissioned to create the work and is recognised as one of the country's leading figurative sculptors, most recently creating the portrait of King Charles III for the Royal Mint.

This report proposes a £10,000 contribution from the City Council for the work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That a capital grant of £10,000 be awarded to the Chapter of Winchester Cathedral in support of creation of the Jane Austen 250 year memorial statue. The financial award be made once work on the original is commissioned.
2. That if funding for the bronze casting not be secured, it be noted that the clay original can be displayed for the anniversary year.
3. That the Chapter work with the City Council in order to incorporate the Jane Austen 250 year memorial statue in trail leaflets and campaigns to provide the opportunity for as many people as possible to see the work, both during the anniversary year and after.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The city and district of Winchester has a well acknowledged and broad creative and cultural sector. The importance of creative art in all its forms supports regular recognition of Winchester in quality of life surveys. A vibrant place to live and quality of life is valued by residents and creative art actively supports the visitor economy.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 All financial risk is borne by the Chapter of Winchester Cathedral. The project is in three phases – the creation of a clay maquette, creation of a full size original and casting of the bronze. The council's contribution will go towards the full size original, and therefore if insufficient funding is raised to cast the bronze, the full size original will be available for display during the anniversary year. The total project cost is in the region of £100,000 with a £10,000 contribution requested from the City Council and County Council. All other monies will be raised from benefactors.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None

4 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 4.1 The Chapter intends to undertake public engagement from January to March 2024 and although the detailed approach has yet to be decided, this includes a public meeting and the opportunity to give online feedback.
- 4.2 A 57cm resin maquette has already been produced and a brochure produced by the Chapter (Appendix 1). Public comments will be considered and a full scale size clay original will be sculpted and approved by an expert consultative group. This group includes the Cathedral, the Jane Austen Society and the City of Winchester Trust before casting proceeds.
- 4.3 The ward members of St Michael ward have had opportunity to review the brochure and make comment on the proposals. At the point of report dispatch, Cllr Edwards had responded to indicate his support for the proposed works.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The use of bronze is common in figurative work due to its malleable nature and bronze has historically been used in construction, for example with casements identified dating back to the 14th Century. Bronze does not require galvanising or coating and ultimately would be fully recyclable.

6 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

6.1 None, the statue is fully accessible to all member of the community

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Chapter had previously commissioned a design from Jennings unveiled in 2018 which received a mixed reaction. The work was paused, further research was undertaken and this new design is of Jane herself.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Funding from the council can be accommodated from existing resources	
Exposure to challenge	A previous proposal by the Chapter did not receive public support, and the Chapter will undertake public consultation before commencing work. Money will not be released until a positive decision to proceed is made by the Chapter	
Innovation		There are a range of Jane Austen 250 commemorative events, but the installation of a statue provides an enduring recognition of her importance to the city
Reputation		Support for the Jane Austen 250 year commemoration has positive reputational benefits to the council
Achievement of outcome	The council's contribution will enable a full size clay original to be created. Should further funding for the bronze cast not be secured, the original can be displayed during the anniversary year	

8 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 8.1 Hampshire and Winchester last commemorated the life of Jane Austen in 2017 in the 200th year of her death. The council installed iconic phrases in the Chesil car park, supported a 'sitting with Jane' installation seating project and developed the 'Hello Jane' trail where phrases were painted on footways across the City.
- 8.2 The council is already participating in the 250 year celebration of her birth through co-ordination of a cross-county Jane Austen 250 group and a Winchester Jane Austen 250 group to deliver on a series of initiatives including:
- a) a revised Jane Austen trail around the City that incorporates notable locations relating to her time in Winchester alongside key events and activities that are happening to mark the anniversary year (e.g. flagship Austen exhibition at The Arc, events at the College, guided tours, Cathedral events).
 - b) 'Austen Artefacts' – a collaborative exhibition which brings together artefacts relating to Austen's life work and legacy from museums, historic buildings and community groups from across Hampshire on display in venues across the City.
 - c) a joint 'Jane Austen' ticket or pass for related attractions and events.
 - d) a marketing and communications programme including a dedicated Jane Austen in Winchester campaign page on visitwinchester.co.uk – a 'one stop shop' for all Jane Austen in Winchester events, attractions, activities and news, and public relations activity to achieve national and international media coverage.
 - e) Jane Austen in Winchester film.
 - f) engaging with local hospitality and retail businesses to theme their 'offer' during 2025 to spread the economic impact of increased footfall.
 - g) partnerships with Visit England/Visit Britain, Visit West, Visit Peak District & Derbyshire, to maximise exposure and access to international markets.
- 8.3 This report sets out that the council has been invited, along with the county council, to make a contribution to the bronze statue of Jane being commissioned by the Chapter of Winchester Cathedral and a £10,000 financial award is proposed subject to a positive decision to proceed by the Chapter post consideration of public comments.
- 8.4 The statue will be of Jane standing life size, with her writing table and is proposed to be sited adjacent to the Cathedral Offices. The installation will require planning permission which is to be sought in early 2024.

8.5 The statue is well sited for those who intend to visit the Cathedral and travel onwards to Winchester College, past 8 College Street where Jane died. The College are also working towards opening 8 College Street in the 250 year for more regular visits. However, it is important that the story of Jane is made available to all residents and visitors and a Women in Winchester trail is under development linking the proposed Jane Austen statue with Licoricia who is located at the Arc.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9.1 The Council could choose not to contribute to the work, but this is not recommended due to the close connection of Jane Austen to the city of Winchester.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

The Austen Trail, available from
<https://www.visitwinchester.co.uk/app/uploads/2019/07/Austen-Trail.pdf>

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Jane Austen 2025: A Legacy: The Chapter of Winchester Cathedral