200th Anniversary of Braille

Report by Saty Kaur, Chief Officer Corporate Solutions

Report for Decision

1   Recommendations

Council are asked to:
- Note the 200th anniversary of Louis Braille; and
- Endorse the officer recommended actions to recognise the 200th anniversary.

2   Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

To update Council on the request to support the 200th anniversary of Braille.

Date   Friday 26 January 2024

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3   Background

3.1   The braille system is based on six raised dots, arranged in two columns of three. Variations of the six dots represent the letters of the alphabet, punctuation and groups of letters.

3.2   Louis Braille (1809-52), from France, was the inventor of Braille, having become blind at the age of 4. The system was invented and developed through the early 1820s when Louis Braille was a teenager.

Main Report

3.3   August 2024 is the 200th anniversary of the invention of the Braille system. Braille provides an active reading and writing methods for people who cannot access print. It provides people with independence, learning, literacy, and the enjoyment of reading. By opening doors in this way it makes a different for blind and partially sighted people.

3.4   RNIB is the largest publisher of Braille in Europe and published its first braille book in 1871. Today, it's library holds over 25,000 books and music scores.

Recognition of Louis Braille

3.5   RNIB Scotland has written to Midlothian Council (Appendix B) asking it to consider naming of streets in new build developments, or new buildings, after Louis Braille.

3.6   Council should note that there is already a Louis Braille Way in Gorebridge. As per the current street naming policy, it is not possible to duplicate a street name except in the circumstances of a street encompassing a flatted development which is attached to the existing street, whereby the flatted development may be given the same name with its uniqueness being identified by using a different suffix such as Place, Court or Way. Therefore, it would not be possible to name any other street or otherwise after Louis Braille. However, it is proposed to work with the local community to consider a small celebration event in the green open space within Louis Braille Way.

3.7   In recognition of the 200th anniversary, officers have identified existing work and activities that could be promoted during the 200th anniversary month:

- **Libraries:** there has previously not been demand for Braille stock however the library will promote the current audiobook and eAudio resources that area available to all library users
- **Communications:** awareness raising of screen readers, translation services through Reachdeck and if requested, through the Communications Team physical documents can be translated into Braille

- **Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability:** work is ongoing through the Local Employability Partnership and Sight Scotland to build relationships and seek to support those with visual impairments into employment
- **Equalities:** the Equalities Mainstreaming Plan is reviewed annually and during the 2024/25 review the actions associated with visual impairment will be looked at to see what else can be achieved in this area.

4   Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1   Resource

No resource implications

4.2   Digital

No digital implications

4.3   Risk

No risk implications

4.4   Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

Visual impairment is identified in the Council's Equalities Mainstreaming Plan. The report does not propose any changes that would require an IIA to be completed.

4.4   Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications
Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1   Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

N/A

A.2   Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

☐ Holistic Working
☐ Hub and Spoke
☐ Modern
☐ Sustainable
☐ Transformational
☐ Preventative
☐ Asset-based
☐ Continuous Improvement
☐ One size fits one
☒ None of the above

A.3   Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

☐ One Council Working with you, for you
☐ Preventative and Sustainable
☐ Efficient and Modern
☐ Innovative and Ambitious
☒ None of the above

A.4   Delivering Best Value

N/A

A.5   Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

N/A

A.6   Impact on Performance and Outcomes

N/A

A.7   Adopting a Preventative Approach

N/A

A.8   Supporting Sustainable Development

N/A