

Dear Colleagues,

### **Holocaust Memorial Day 2021**

As a council we will once again be marking Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2021.

This was the date that Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi concentration camp, was liberated in 1945. It is now the date that everyone remembers the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust under Nazi persecution, and in the subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. On Holocaust Memorial Day we honour the survivors of these regimes and challenge ourselves to use the lessons of their experiences to inform our lives today.

The theme for this year's HMD is Be the Light in the Darkness. This encourages everyone to reflect on the depths that humanity can sink to, but also the ways individuals and communities resisted that darkness to 'be the light' before, during and after genocide.

As a council we will be marking the day with a virtual ceremony including the Mayor's Chaplain and the Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure. This will be available to view on a dedicated section on the website at [www.ashford.gov.uk/holocaust-memorial-day](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/holocaust-memorial-day) which will also include a virtual exhibition exploring this year's theme. A posy will also be laid at the Anne Frank tree in the Memorial Gardens.

You will be able to get involved as the Victoria Park team are putting together some tutorial videos on how to create your own special HMD lantern. You can light a candle and put it in your window at 8pm on 27 January then upload a photo of your candle on social media, using the hashtags #HolocaustMemorialDay #LightintheDarkness #HMDAshford. There will be a link online for anyone who wants to make a donation to the Holocaust Memorial Trust.

Every year thousands of people come together across the UK to mark the day, learning the lessons of the past and recognising that genocide does not take place on its own. It is a steady process which can begin if discrimination, racism and hatred are not checked and prevented.

We are fortunate here in the UK; we are not at immediate risk of genocide. However, discrimination has not ended, nor has the use of the language of hatred or exclusion. There is still much to do to create a safer future and HMD is an opportunity to continue to stress this process.

I hope you will join us in marking this important day, as we all continue to play our part in preventing future genocide.

Gerry Clarkson CBE, BA (Hons)

**Leader - Ashford Borough Council**

**Distribution:** All Members of the Parish or Town Council, and representatives of the Community Forums (Please do not circulate beyond the above recipients).