

Stratford takes over guardianship of gun after RSA liquidation



Stratford's tiny council isn't preparing for World War III, but it has taken on a large field gun for the town.

The World War II artillery piece has sat outside the Stratford RSA for decades but since the club's liquidation in March, it had to be moved from the property and the town was at risk of losing the historic weapon.

But on Tuesday, Stratford's councillors voted unanimously to accept guardianship of the gun to keep it in the town.

It's not the first time the council has stepped in to fill the gap left by the RSA's closure: in April, it organised the ANZAC parades through the town and gathered residents to create wreathes for the day.

The gun will still be owned by the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), but the council will be responsible for looking after the piece, which Mayor Neil Volzke estimated had been in the town since at least 1979.

The NZDF said it would consent to the council taking on the gun if it agreed with the location it would be moved to.

Three locations were suggested: King Edward Park beside the Malone Memorial Gates, in front of the War Memorial Centre and in the reserve beside the Colonel Malone statue at the southern end of Broadway.

The NZDF said it wouldn't approve of putting it beside the Cross of Remembrance by the centre as it "could be seen as inappropriate, insensitive and had the potential to cause some angst by those visiting the area".

Councillors Peter Dalziel and Grant Boyde moved to accept guardianship of the gun and were supported by the other councillors.

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