

Council – 22nd September 2014

Guidance on Honorary Freemen

1. Summary

This report provides the Council with guidance on the awarding of Freedom of the Borough, together with a process to be followed upon the receipt of nominations for such an honour.

2. Recommendations

That the process for granting Freedom of the Borough as set out in the guidance document attached as an Appendix to this report, be adopted.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 At the meeting of Council held on 11th December 2013, it was resolved to instruct officers to consult and develop a protocol in relation to any future nominations to confer Freedom of the Borough of Walsall to be presented for consideration at a meeting of this Council at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.2 Attached as an **Appendix** to this report is a guidance note and suggested process to be followed when giving consideration to the granting of the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

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Chief Executive
12th September 2014



Walsall Council

Guidance on Honorary Freemen

1. History

The Honorary Freedom of the Boroughs Act 1885 (now replaced by the Local Government Act 1972) and further amended by Section 180 of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 permitted Councils to give the title of Honorary Freemen to “persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough”. The freedom itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour to recognise the significant and valuable services rendered to the Borough by that person.

2. Eligibility

People from all walks of life and all sections of society who have made a difference to the community are eligible to be nominated as Honorary Freemen provided that, at the time of nomination, they are living in the Borough. However, in keeping with the special nature of Honorary Freemen, the award should be strictly limited to those who have made a most exceptional contribution to the community of Walsall and who have demonstrated “service above self”.

The maximum number of Freemen, at any one time, is to be restricted to eight in recognition of the important status of this award. Existing Councillors and serving Council officers are not eligible to be nominated.

A nomination form needs to be completed in full, following the instructions in each section closely. It is important that as much information as possible is provided about the nominee, and an explanation about what their actual contribution in an area has been.

3. Confidentiality

All nominations for Honorary Freemen are treated in the strictest confidence. The nominee should **not** be informed that they have been nominated, as it is not fair to raise expectations in case they are not met.

4. Acknowledgement

An acknowledgement will be sent upon receipt of the nomination form. Correspondence will not be entered into on the merits of a particular nomination whilst it is under consideration.

5. **Nomination process**

Group Leaders will meet on an ad hoc basis to give consideration to the nomination received. The details of the nominee will be available **only** to the leaders.

Any recommendation to confer the honour should be a unanimous decision. The names of anyone not selected will not be recorded, but the person making the nomination will be notified.

The Chief Executive will contact any person that is recommended to be awarded Honorary Freeman status, to ask that person, if he or she were supported by the Council, whether or not he or she would accept.

A special meeting of the Council will then be held to consider granting Honorary Freeman to the nominees. This must be agreed by not less than two thirds of the members present as required by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. The decision will include the reasons for the Council's decision and the details of the public service provided by the recipient. Each recipient will then be presented with a casket and scroll.

A Civic Reception, hosted by the Mayor, will be held after the special Council meeting to give an opportunity to offer congratulations to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman.

6. **Unsuccessful and re-nominations**

If an application is unsuccessful, a further nomination may not be re-submitted for 3 years.

7. **Benefits following receipt of title**

The title of Honorary Freeman is the highest honour that a Borough can bestow although it carries no privileges. However, those successful will be able to use the title of "Freeman" and receive invitations to major civic events. Their name will also be displayed on a roll of honour in a prominent position in a civic building.