

Committee: Standards and General Purposes

Date: 29 June 2017

Wards: All

Subject: Freedom of the Borough – report of the working group

Lead officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director of Corporate Governance

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair, Standards and General Purposes Committee

Contact officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services,
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Recommendation:

1. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends to Council that the award of Freedom of the Borough be made posthumously to the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield in recognition of the substantial contribution he made to the borough;
 2. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends to Council that it records its thanks and presents a certificate to the 210 Squadron to congratulate it on its 50th anniversary and recognise the Squadron's long service to the borough.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. At its meeting on 9 March 2017, the Standards and General Purposes Committee established a small working group comprising Councillors Mary-Jane Jeanes, Ian Munn and David Williams. The Committee asked the working group to consider nominations for the award of the freedom of the borough and report back.
- 1.2. This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the working group.

2 FINDINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Freedom of the Borough

- 2.1. The working group met once to consider the nominations that were currently under discussion by the political groups.
- 2.2. Members noted that the Freedom of the Borough is an important honour that requires careful thought prior to bestowal. Members also noted the criteria and process for awarding Freedom of the Borough (set out in Appendix 1 of this report), in particular that it should only be awarded in exceptional circumstances where the prospective recipient is an individual or organisation of distinction and has rendered eminent services to the borough.
- 2.3. Members agreed that the posthumous nomination of the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield (set out in Appendix 2) met the criteria and demonstrated

that he had made a substantial contribution to the borough's religious and spiritual life, civic service and charitable work. The nomination is supported by all Groups on the Council and therefore would meet the 2/3 requirement at Council.

- 2.4. The working group therefore recommended that the nomination should be forwarded by the Standards and General Purposes Committee to Council as soon as possible.

Special commendation

- 2.5. The working group also discussed the strong links that the 210 Squadron has to the borough, working in partnership with churches and other local organisations as well as taking the lead in Remembrance Sunday parades for over 30 years and, more recently, on Armed Forces day parades. Members noted that the 210 Squadron would be celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

- 2.6. The working group has therefore recommended that the Standards and General Purposes should recommend that Council congratulate the 210 Squadron on its 50th anniversary, thank it for the role it plays in the borough and present it with a framed certificate.

3 NEXT STEPS

Freedom of the Borough

- 3.1. If the Committee accepts the recommendation of the working group in respect of the freedom of the borough nomination of the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield, the next steps are:
- a) To send a report to the next meeting of Council (12 July) recommending that Council accept the nomination
 - b) Council, in accepting the nomination, should resolve to hold a Special Meeting of Council at which it would pass the resolution as required by Section 248 of the Local Government Act 1972 to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield
 - c) A Special Meeting of Council would then be held, possibly immediately prior to the scheduled Council meeting on 13 September, to which family and friends of the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield would be invited.

3.2. Special Commendation

- 3.3. If the Committee accepts the recommendation of the working group in relation to the 210 Squadron, this should be included in its report to Council on 12 July. Subject to Council's agreement, a framed certificate would be presented to the 210 Squadron at a future meeting of Council.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The Committee may reject the recommendations of the working group or may choose different actions to implement the recommendations.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. Members of the working group have discussed their recommendations with the political groups.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. To be determined by the Standards and General Purposes Committee and Council.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

Any expenditure associated with conferring the Honorary Freedom of the Borough and the presentation of a framed certification of commendation will be from existing budgets.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Section 249 (paragraphs 5 and 6) of the Local Government Act 1972 states:

(i) (5) The Council of a London Borough... may, by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, admit to the borough persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the borough”

(ii) (6) The Council of a London Borough...may spend such reasonable sum as they think fit for the presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person upon whom they have conferred the title of (honorary alderman) or admitted to be an honorary freeman of the ...borough..

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. None

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix 1 – criteria and process for Freedom of the Borough

Appendix 2 - nomination form for the late Reverend Andrew Wakefield

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Criteria and Process for Awarding Freedom of the Borough

Criteria

Freedom of the Borough is a high honour which should only be awarded in exceptional circumstances where the prospective recipient is an individual or organisation of distinction and has rendered eminent services to the borough.

Candidates should have a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to Merton or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so have enhanced the reputation of the borough.

Candidates should have made a substantial contribution to the borough in any area of activity, which could include:

- artistic and cultural endeavours
- business, economic growth and prosperity
- charitable work
- improvement to the built and natural environment
- religious and spiritual life
- sports activities
- civic service

The award may be granted posthumously.

Procedures

Nominations for persons or organisations to be granted Freedom of the Borough, may be made by any serving Member of the Council to the Monitoring Officer on the appropriate form. The Member should first raise the matter for discussion within their political group.

Once a nomination is received, the Monitoring Officer will check that sufficient information has been provided on the form and will pass it to the Standards and General Purposes Committee for consideration.

The Monitoring Officer will write to all councillors at least once during the four yearly municipal cycle, preferably at or near the midpoint, to draw their attention to the opportunity to make nominations

The Standards and General Purposes Committee may establish a small working group to informally assess nominations and the likelihood of meeting the 2/3 criteria. The working group would report back to the Standards and General Purposes Committee in regard to any nominee who it believed would meet the criteria and achieve sufficient support at Council.

Standards and General Purposes Committee shall report to Council and, should Council accept the nomination, a Special Meeting of Council would then be called to pass the resolution as required by Section 248 of the Local Government Act 1972.

NOMINATION FOR FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

1. Name of the person or organisation being nominated for Freedom of the Borough.

The Revd Dr Andrew Desmond Wakefield (Deceased)

2. Freedom of the Borough is a high honour which should only be awarded in exceptional circumstances where the prospective recipient is an individual or organisation of distinction and has rendered eminent services to the borough.

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Candidates should have made a substantial contribution to the borough in any area of activity, which could include:

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- sports activities
- civic service

The award may be granted posthumously.

3. The award of the Freedom of the Borough requires support of 2/3 of Council. Nominations should therefore first be discussed within your political group and, where appropriate, with other group leaders. In your opinion, is the nomination likely to achieve the required 2/3 support at Council?

YES

NO

4. Please use the box below to outline your nominee's outstanding achievements in the Borough or on the international stage which have brought pride and satisfaction to the Borough. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

Andrew Wakefield's contribution to the life of the London Borough of Merton was exceptional. He was an ordained minister in the Church of England – recently serving as Borough Dean - but once joked that his bishop would be amazed at how much time he gave to life in the community. In death the Bishop of Kingston wrote of his large, 'generous and expansive character' who was a real 'person and priest' and that 'he cared deeply about justice in the community and strong interfaith relations. He worked tirelessly and determinedly in the Civic life of Merton and beyond'.

In short Andrew Wakefield demonstrably fulfilled at least three of the 'contribution criteria' of a candidate for Freeman of the Borough, albeit posthumously.

Initially his involvement began with the South London Industrial Mission where he started working with council members and officers. Gradually his contacts across the civic and public life of the borough were immense and he moved easily between all political perspectives.

Andrew played a key part in the formation of the GLA's Civic Forum which he chaired and it underlined his capacity to represent the community and voluntary sector. His involvement across many areas of public policy was a sign of his ability to represent the wide range of opinions that are found in any civic and public debate. Andrew was also an entrepreneur, which led him into many activities that had business links. He chaired Merton Chamber of Commerce.

Andrew paid a critical part in setting up the London Inter Faith Forum. He also displayed an immense ability to work across all faith traditions and in Merton was a regular participant at both the Mosque and Synagogue.

He was also Chairman of the Safer Neighbourhood Board and actively involved in the police's advisory body as a passionate advocate of inclusion and social cohesion.

His roles led naturally to a request that he chaired the Merton Partnership's Community Plan for Merton which, of necessity, drew on his breadth of experience in so many different capacities to assist in the creation of a healthy community

In summary, Roehampton University awarded him an honorary Doctorate of Divinity not long before his sudden and untimely death, for his 30 years of service to Merton. As a minister, Andrew's prayer was both traditional and practical and he knew T. S. Eliot's poem with the words '*and prayer is more than words*'. I submit respectfully that the Council should likewise turn the words of this nomination into action and award him the highest honour it can bestow - the Freedom of the Borough.

5. Nomination submitted by:

Councillor ___David T Williams JP___ **Date**__ 27 March 2017_____

Please return this form to The Monitoring Officer, Merton Civic Centre or by e-mail to democratic.services@merton.gov.uk