

Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date: 19 July 2023

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

Lead officer: Louise Round, Monitoring Officer, louise.round@merton.gov.uk

Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton, Chair, Standards and General Purposes Committee

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Recommendations:

- A. That the Standards and General Purposes Committee recommends to Council that the award of Freedom of the Borough be made to Ivor Heller for his work for AFC Wimbledon and his continuing work within the community
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. At its meeting on 27 April 2023, the Standards and General Purposes Committee established a small working group to consider nominations for the award of the freedom of the borough and report back.
- 1.2. The working group comprised of Councillors Edith Macauley, Caroline Cooper-Marbiah, Agatha Akyigyina, Victoria Wilson, Edward Foley and Michael Paterson.
- 1.3. This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the working group.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The working group met once on 21 June 2023 to consider the nomination of Mr Ivor Heller submitted by numerous parties (Appendix A – restricted). No other nominations were received.
- 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, in particular that it should only be awarded in exceptional circumstances where the prospective recipient is an individual or organisation of distinction or has rendered eminent services to the borough.
- 2.3. Members agreed that the nomination for Mr Heller met the criteria and demonstrated that he made a substantial contribution to the Borough. 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 agreed by the Standards and General Purposes Committee to recommend to Council as soon as possible.
- 2.5. Next Steps:
- 2.6. If the Committee accepts the recommendation of the working group in respect of the freedom of the borough nomination of Mr Ivor Heller the next steps are:

a) To arrange a special meeting under section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chief Executive has the power to call a meeting for this purpose under Council Procedure Rule 3.1(d);

b) That special meeting could either precede the ordinary meeting already scheduled for 13 September or be fixed on a separate day

c) If Council accepts the nomination, it would pass the resolution to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Mr Ivor Heller. Such a resolution would require the agreement of two thirds of the members of the council present and voting at the meeting

Council would then award the Freedom of the Borough to Mr Heller.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

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

5 TIMETABLE

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

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. 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

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Section 249 (paragraphs 5 and 6) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Council of a London Borough may admit a person of distinction or someone who has , in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the borough to be an honorary freeman of the borough.

7.2. As stated above, a resolution to confer such status requires a two thirds majority of members present and voting at a special meeting. Having conferred such status, the Council may spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None

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

- Appendix A Nomination Forms (Restricted)

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None

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