

Governance and Ethics Committee

9 July 2021

Report title	Protocol for Awarding Freedom of the City	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities	
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Originating service	Governance	
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Report to be considered by	Council, 21 July 2021	

Recommendation for decision:

The Governance and Ethics Committee recommends that Council:

1. Approve the protocol for awarding Freedom of the City.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report proposes the adoption of a protocol which will clarify the nomination process and the way in which the Freedom of the City will be awarded in future. There are presently no guidelines or protocols governing the way in which the Council makes such awards.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The appointment of freeman is set out in section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, and there are no specific provisions in relation to this in the Council's constitution at present. Importantly the appointment needs to be made by Council at a meeting called specially for this purpose. At that meeting at least 2/3 of the Councillors attending that meeting need to support the nomination for it to be passed.
- 2.2 The relevant section is currently stated below and the key aspects are that the person needs to be a person of distinction and someone who in the opinion of the authority has "rendered eminent services to that place or area":

249 Honorary titles]

[(5) Subject as follows, a relevant authority may admit to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of the place or area for which it is the authority—

(a) persons of distinction, and

(b) persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area.

(7) The power in subsection (5) above is exercisable by resolution of the relevant authority.

(8) A resolution under subsection (7) above must be passed—

(a) at a meeting of the relevant authority which is specially convened for the purpose and where notice of the object of the meeting has been given; and

(b) by not less than two-thirds of the members of the relevant authority (or, in the case of charter trustees, of the trustees) who vote on it.

(9) A relevant authority may spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom the authority has conferred the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman under subsection (5) above.

- 2.3 The overriding principle is that these awards should be made on merit, defined as:
- Achievement
 - Exceptional Service
- 2.4 Awards should not be for a job well done or because someone has reached a particular level. They should be awarded because an individual has 'gone the extra mile' in the contribution they have made or stand out 'head and shoulders' above others in what has been achieved.
- 2.5 As this is the highest honour that a council can grant it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value.
- 2.6 The title of Honorary Freeman does not give any rights but it is hoped that person would support the Office of Mayor at civic functions.
- 2.7 The awarding of the Freedom of the City to Service Units has generally provided a dignified and satisfactory means of enabling a city or borough to honour a distinguished unit of the Armed Forces.

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 There is presently no adopted process at the Council for the criteria of awarding Freedom of the City.
- 3.2 In order for candidates to be considered in other authorities, they must be able to demonstrate a strong and continuing connection with, and commitment to, the city or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so, have enhanced the reputation of the city.

Other authorities have determined the following as being areas in which contributions may have enhanced the area: -

- 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
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Council adopts the following criteria to be used in determining nominations for the award of Freedom of the City:

A nominee must have they must be able to demonstrate a strong and continuing connection with, and commitment to, the city or have made a major contribution to the city and in doing so, have enhanced the reputation of the city and done at least one of the following:

- delivered in a way that has brought distinction to city life and enhanced the city's reputation in the area or activity concerned;
- contributed in a way to improve the lives of those less able to help themselves;
- demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in the city

3.4 As part of the overall improvements the Council is making to its governance and oversight arrangements, it is recommended that the above approach is adopted in respect of the award of the Freedom of the City.

4.0 Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 The current practice of awarding the Freedom of the City without guiding principles or oversight prior to a decision is not recommended.

4.2 It is recommended that the Council agree a process for nominations.

5.0 Nomination Process

5.1 Nominations for persons or organisations to be granted Freedom of the City, may be made by any serving Councillor of the Council to the Director of Governance on the appropriate form (see Appendix 1).

5.2 Each nomination must contain the support of at least 10 Councillors of the Council and where appropriate, the Councillor should first raise the matter for discussion within their political group.

5.3 The Director of Governance will check that sufficient information has been provided on the form and will then pass the nomination to the Group Leaders for consideration.

5.4 The Group Leaders and the Mayor will meet to consider the nomination against the criteria. Following unanimous agreement, a report will be prepared for Governance and Ethics Committee recommending the convening of a special meeting of the Council on a date to be determined to approve the conferment of the title.

5.5 Once the recommendation has been approved, a special meeting of the Council will be held normally on a date following the meeting of the Governance and Ethics Committee and immediately prior to the next ordinary meeting of the Council (i.e. on the same day, approximately 15 minutes beforehand).

5.6 Alternatively, they may decide that the nomination is not suitable as it does not meet the criteria. Where a nomination is not agreed, the reasons for not progressing the nomination will be provided by the Director of Governance to the nominating councillors. In such circumstances, further nominations for an individual will not be considered for a further twelve months.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications associated with the establishment of a protocol governing the award of the Freedom of the City, there are inevitably one-off costs at the time that the Council determines that it wishes to make an award.
- 6.2 When a Freedom of the City is awarded it is traditional to hold a celebratory event in the City Suite. The total estimated cost of the Freedom Scrolls and celebratory event is in the region of £3,000. This is funded from existing budgets set aside for hospitality and equipment purchases within Democratic Services. [AS/07072021/S]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The statutory provisions in respect of the award of the Freedom of the City are outlined in the main body of this report. [DP/06/07/2021]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

9.0 All other Implications

- 9.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 N/a

11.0 Apprentices

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Nomination Form for Freedom of the City



NOMINATION FORM FOR FREEDOM OF THE CITY

I, Councillor _____
wish to nominate the following person (organisation) to be considered for the status
of Freedom of the City of Wolverhampton.

Nominee _____

I am aware that the following criteria needs to be applied to the achievements of the
nominee. They have:

- delivered in a way that has brought distinction to city life and enhanced
the city's reputation in the area or activity concerned
- contributed in a way to improve the lives of those less able to help themselves
- demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in
the city.

I believe that they have met these criteria in the following way:

Please continue overleaf or attach supporting evidence.

We the undersigned Councillors support this nomination for Freedom of the City:

NAME:
SIGNATURE:

NAME:
SIGNATURE:

NAME:
SIGNATURE:

NAME:
SIGNATURE:

NAME:
SIGNATURE:

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