

(O) Freedom of the Borough and City Protocol

1. Background

The medieval term 'freeman' traditionally a definition of status meant someone who was not the property of a feudal lord but enjoyed privileges such as the right to earn money and own land. Town dwellers who were protected by the charter of their town or City were often free - hence the term 'Freedom of the City'.

The conferment of the Honorary Freedom of a Borough or City has been established since 1885 by the Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act (1885) as the highest honour which the local authority can bestow and should not be given too often.

The power of the Council to confer the Honorary Freedom of the Borough is within section 66 of the Local Government Act (1985): -

“(1) The council may from time to time, by the authority of not less than two-thirds of their number present and voting at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, admit to be honorary freemen of the borough persons of distinction and any persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the borough.

(2) The admission of such person to be a freeman shall not confer on him the right of voting in any election, or of sharing in the benefit of any land or stock of the borough or of the Corporation, or of any property held wholly or partly on any charitable trust.”

To be granted the title of Honorary Freeman is a mark of distinction upon the person whom the Council wishes to honour. The Freedom itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour, reflecting the eminence of the person on whom it is conferred or as recognition of significant and valuable services rendered to the Borough or City by that person. It is normally an honour or award to men or women of note who have lived or worked in the Borough and City, and who are proud to be a part of the City's history by becoming freemen or in the case of HM Services Units, Freedom of Entry.

2. What criteria is to be used to award this status?

The overriding principle is that these awards should be made on merit, defined as:

- Outstanding Achievement or contribution to the community
- Exceptional Service

These should both be in respect of the Borough and City of Douglas.

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.

To be considered, the nominee should meet at least 2 of the following criteria:

- delivered in a way that has brought distinction to Borough and City life and enhanced the Borough and 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 Borough and City.

As this is the highest honour that the Council can grant it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value.

The title of Honorary Freeman does not give any rights or responsibilities, but it is expected that the person would support civic functions, and they would be invited to such events.

The awarding of the Freedom of the Borough and City to Service Units 'to march through the streets of the Borough and City with bayonets fixed, drums beating and Colours flying' is really an empty grant. The practice has been generally accepted and provides a dignified and satisfactory means of enabling a Borough or City to honour a distinguished unit of Her Majesty's forces.

3. The Process

The recommendation to confer the status of Freeman is made by the Executive Committee following nomination by any elected Member.

For candidates to be considered they must be able to demonstrate a strong and continuing connection with, and commitment to, the Borough and City or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so, have enhanced the reputation of the Borough and City.

To assist it is suggested that this could include the following:

- 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

Only in exceptional circumstances should consideration be given to the admission of organisations.

4. The Procedure

The Executive Committee has agreed the following procedure.

Nominations for persons or organisations to be granted Freedom of the Borough and City, may be made by any serving Member of the Council to the Chief Executive on the appropriate form (see Appendix A) or by email with a supporting rationale.

The Chief Executive will check that sufficient information has been provided on the form and a report will then be made to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will meet to consider the nomination against the criteria. It will make a recommendation to a Special Council Meeting under Section 66 of the Local Government Act (1985) and by the authority of not less than two-thirds of their Members present and voting, that the honour is bestowed and admission as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough and City is granted to the relevant person. Alternatively, they may decide that the nomination is not suitable as it does not meet the criteria.

5. The Ceremony

The ceremony for the admitting of an Honorary Freeman is a formal occasion.

Section 66 of the Local Government Act 1985 (sub section 1) deals with the admission to the Honorary Freedom of the Borough and City of Douglas of 'persons of distinction and persons who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough and City'.

The Act provides that a Special Meeting of the Council (notice being given 5 days prior to the meeting) must be convened with the specific object of passing the resolution.

The resolution should recite the grounds upon which the recommendation is being made, and details of the public services rendered by the recipient should be included.

The procedure should be carried out with the utmost formality and the Honorary Freeman Elect is invited and should attend the Special Council Meeting and sit in the Chamber with their family.

After passing the resolution, a sealed and illuminated address of the grant of Honorary Freedom, containing a copy of the formal resolution, should then be presented to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman by the Mayor with a Freedom of the Borough and City badge, with an opportunity being given for the recipient to reply.

After the formal proceedings come to an end, it is usual to close the meeting and adjourn for a small reception in the Mayor's Parlour. This gives an opportunity for the invited guests to offer their congratulations to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman.

The Honorary Freedom badge should only be worn on civic occasions, usually within the home authority, unless specifically requested by a host authority outside.

APPENDIX A

NOMINATION FORM FOR FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH AND CITY

I Councillor wish to nominate the following person to be considered for the status of Freedom of the Borough and Douglas City Council.

Nominee.....

I am aware that the following criterion 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 Borough and City.

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

Please continue overleaf or attach supporting evidence.