

Newcastle- under- Lyme Borough Council

Protocol for determining whether the Freedom of the Borough should be conferred

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers a local authority to confer the “Freedom of the Borough” to persons of distinction, who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough.
- 1.2 The Freedom of the Borough is the highest honour that the Council can grant. It should only be used sparingly and awarded on merit to exceptional persons. It should not be given too often. The overriding principle must be that this award should be made on merit based on significant achievement or exceptional service.
- 1.3 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 made a contribution which is exceptional and they stand out ‘head and shoulders’ above others in what has been achieved.
- 1.4 Normally honours are awarded to those men or women who have been raised, lived or worked or who have a strong connection with the Borough, and have demonstrated excellence in their field and in the process raised the profile and enhanced the reputation of the Borough either nationally or internationally.
- 1.5 Freedom of the Borough will not be awarded to serving Councillors.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 It is important that, if a nomination to confer an Honorary Freedom is to be considered, that all Members of the Council are in possession of sufficient facts in order to make a decision as to whether the honour should be conferred. There may be instances where there are strongly held views for and against and these need to be addressed as far as possible in advance of an Extraordinary Council meeting called for the purpose as a unanimous decision is clearly desirable in the circumstances (although the Act actually requires a 2/3 majority of those present and voting).
- 2.2 The title of Honorary Freeman/woman is a mark of distinction upon the person whom the Council wishes to honour. Conferring the Freedom of the Borough does not grant the title holder any privileges, legal rights or responsibilities. For example, they have no rights to attend Council or Committee meetings,

nor can they be paid an allowance. However, it is a symbolic connection with the Council and it is hoped that those who are awarded this honour will support the Office of the Mayor at civic events and functions.

3.0 Criteria for conferring the Freedom of the Borough

3.1 It is in the interests of transparency and public confidence that the Council adopts clear criteria for conferring the Freedom of the Borough. It is proposed that one or more of the following are used as the criteria for the award:

The person has:

- demonstrated exceptional achievement or service to the community which is outstanding in its field;
- made a real difference in their field of work or their community;
- brought distinction to the Borough or enhanced its reputation;
- given outstanding military service;
- demonstrated innovation, entrepreneurship or exceptional business acumen which has delivered benefits to the Borough;
- evidenced exceptional charitable service to the Borough, through either a national or locally based charity;
- evidenced exceptional voluntary service to the Borough or any part of it or community within it;
- carried the respect of and inspired his/her peers;
- significantly improved the lot of those less able to help themselves or suffering disadvantage;
- promoted community cohesion;
- contributed to the Borough beyond the call of duty in a way that stands out above others.

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

3.3 As this is the highest honour that a Borough Council can grant, it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value. Accordingly, other than in exceptional circumstances, no more than one nominee will be taken forward annually and there is no obligation to approve any of the nominations.

4.0 Procedure to be adopted on receipt of a Motion to confer the Freedom of the Borough

4.1 Nominations for persons to be granted the Freedom of the Borough may be made by any Elected Member to Chief Executive on the appropriate form (see Appendix 1). Each nomination must contain the support of at least 10 other

Council members and the relevant Group Leaders should be advised of the proposed nomination as a courtesy.

- 4.2 It is important that any nomination remains confidential and that the nominee is unaware that he or she is being nominated since not all nominations may be successful.
- 4.3 A member of the public who might wish to suggest a potential nominee may do so by contacting their local ward councillor making a full and clear case for the potential nomination. The Ward Councillor must then follow the process of completing the appropriate form and obtaining the support of at least 10 other Council members.
- 4.4 On receipt of the Nomination Form the Chief Executive will ensure that sufficient information has been provided on the form. Full reasons why the person should be considered must be included in detail.

5.0 The Freedom of the Borough Panel

- 5.1 The Chief Executive will convene a Panel of each of the Leaders of the Political Groups on the Council (Deputy Leaders can substitute if their Leader is unable to attend), with relevant officers to consider:
 - whether the nomination meets the agreed criteria
 - whether there is sufficient support for the matter to go on to the Council for decision.
 - where there are several nominations which one, if any, should go forward to Council for approval
- 5.2 Other than in exceptional circumstances no more than one nominee will be taken forward annually and there is no obligation on the Panel to approve any of the nominations if they do not feel the criteria is fully met. Any nomination which has been unsuccessful can be reconsidered after 12 months and may be put back before the Panel by the relevant Elected Member who should recomplete the nomination process.

6.0 Extraordinary Council Meeting

- 6.1 Should the Freedom of the Borough Panel conclude that it is likely that there will be a two thirds majority voting in favour of a nomination, the Chief Executive will convene an Extraordinary meeting of the Council specifically for the consideration of the one item of business. This will normally be early in the New Year (January – March) to allow any ceremony to take place prior to the end of the current civic year.

- 6.2 At the Extraordinary meeting of the Council, there will be only one item of business and Chief Executive will submit a report setting out the matters considered by the Freedom of the Borough Panel and the recommendation of the Panel to Council to approve the nomination.
- 6.3 The resolution should recite the grounds upon which the recommendation is being made, and details of the public services rendered by the nominee should be included.
- 6.4 The Mayor will take a vote on the recommendation of the Freedom Panel and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting is required. However a unanimous vote is customary and desirable in the circumstances.

(Note: abstentions do not count as a vote and required majority will be deduced from the number of Members actually voting on the item).
- 6.5 The Mayor will then immediately close the meeting.
- 6.6 A Meeting of full Council will normally immediately follow the extraordinary meeting

7.0 Ceremony (at a later date but usually by no later than April each year)

- 7.1 The Honorary Freeman will be presented with a scroll and their name inscribed in the Roll of Honorary Freeman Book which will then be signed and witnessed at a separate ceremony followed by a buffet.

Appendix 1. Nomination Form

Nomination for the Freedom of the Borough

I, Councillorwish to nominate the following person to be considered for the status of Freedom of the Borough of Newcastle-under- Lyme.

**Nominee.....
(NB please ensure this nomination is kept confidential from the nominee)**

I am aware that the following criteria need to be applied to the achievements of the nominee.

- demonstrated exceptional achievement or service to the community which is outstanding in its field;
- made a real difference in their field of work or their community;
- brought distinction to the Borough or enhanced its reputation;
- given outstanding military service;
- demonstrated innovation, entrepreneurship or exceptional business acumen which has delivered benefits to the Borough;
- evidenced exceptional charitable service to the Borough, through either a national or locally based charity;
- evidenced exceptional voluntary service to the Borough or any part of it or community within it;
- carried the respect of and inspired his/her peers;
- significantly improved the lot of those less able to help themselves or suffering disadvantage;
- promoted community cohesion;
- contributed to the Borough beyond the call of duty in a way that stands out above others.

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 Information for the Borough:

NAME: SIGNATURE:	NAME: SIGNATURE:
NAME: SIGNATURE:	NAME: SIGNATURE:
NAME: SIGNATURE:	NAME: SIGNATURE:
NAME: SIGNATURE:	NAME: SIGNATURE:
NAME: SIGNATURE:	NAME: SIGNATURE: