

## **Committee: General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 26 September 2013**

Wards: All

### **Subject: Freedom of the Borough**

Lead officer: Paul Evans, Assistant Director of Corporate Governance

Lead member: Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Leader of the Council

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services, 0208 545 3864

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. That General Purposes Committee note the statutory provisions relating to 'Honorary Freedom of the Borough' and the resolutions taken by Council at its meeting on 10 July 2013.
  - B. That General Purposes consider whether, in addition to Mr Andy Murray, there are other persons deserving of consideration for the Honorary Freedom of the Borough and, if so, what recommendations it wishes to make to Council. The Committee is asked to make nominations and to advise Council on its preferred timetable..
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report sets out the statutory provisions relating to 'Honorary Freedom of the Borough' and the resolutions made by Council at its meeting on 10 July 2013.
- 1.2. The report also asks General Purposes Committee to consider whether it wishes to nominate further persons and, if so, whether it wishes to combine the bestowing of awards so that there is just one Special Meeting of Council for this purpose.

## **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. The admission of persons as Honorary Freemen of the Borough is the highest honour that the Council is able to bestow. This title is given to persons who have, in the opinion of Council, rendered eminent services to the borough.
- 2.2. Since its inception in 1965, the Council has admitted 8 persons as Honorary Freeman of the Borough, the last such admissions being in 2006. In addition, the honour has been bestowed on 'D Company, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Queens Regiment, T.A..
- 2.3. Council at its meeting held on 10 July 2013 considered a report on the admission of persons as Honorary Freeman and resolved as follows:
  - A. agreement is given to the holding of a special meeting to admit Mr Andy Murray as Honorary Freeman of the London Borough of Merton;

B. the Chief Executive is authorised to make all necessary arrangements and spend such reasonable sums as may be required to give effect to resolution A; and

C. recognising that there may be other persons deserving of consideration for the Honorary Freedom of the Borough, not least Merton residents who have made very significant contributions to our local community, but also the last British Ladies' Singles Champion at the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, and therefore asks the General Purposes Committee to consider a report on this at its next meeting for recommendation to Full Council.

2.4. In considering whether it wishes to make any nominations, Committee is asked to note that, in addition to Andy Murray, there are three living British Wimbledon singles tennis champions:

1977 – Virginia Wade

1969 – Ann Haydon-Jones

1961 – Angela Mortimer

2.5. Officers have contacted Andy Murray's agent and are awaiting a response regarding acceptance and to arrange a convenient date for a Special Council meeting in order to convey the honour. Depending on the timetable, it may be possible to admit additional Honorary Freemen at the same meeting. Committee are asked to indicate whether that would be preferable to have two Special Meetings of Council.

2.6. Having regard to the matters discussed above and, in particular resolution C arising from the 10 July Council, General Purposes Committee is asked to consider and recommend to Council as may be appropriate.

### **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None for the purpose of this report.

### **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. This report has been prepared at the request of Council and General Purposes Committee is asked to report back to Council.

### **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. General Purposes is asked to make a recommendation to the Council meeting on 20 November 2013..

### **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. Any expenditure associated with conferring the Honorary Freedom of the Borough will be from existing budgets.

### **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

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

(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...

**8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. General Purposes is asked to consider the human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications of any nominations it chooses to make to Council.

**9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. None for the purpose of this report.

**10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. None for the purpose of this report.

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

- None

**12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1. Officer report presented to Council on 10 July 2013.

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