



Report Reference Number: C/22/13

To: Special Meeting of Council
Date: 21 March 2023
Author: Gina Mulderrig, Democratic Services Officer
Lead Officer: Janet Waggott, Chief Executive

Title: Appointment of Honorary Freeman to Selby District

Summary:

Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Selby District Council to award the Honorary Freeman of the District to individuals or groups who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the District.

This report asks the Council to consider awarding the Honorary Freedom of the District to Number 51 Squadron of The Royal Airforce and The Yorkshire Regiment of The British Army in gratitude for their service during World War 2 and their continued connection to the town of Selby and ongoing ceremonial role in the Armistice Day Ceremony in Selby Cemetery and the Remembrance Day Ceremony at Selby Abbey.

Recommendations:

To consider and decide whether to award the Honorary Freedom of the District to Number 51 Squadron of The Royal Airforce and The Yorkshire Regiment of The British Army.

Reasons for recommendation:

To ensure Council recognises persons and groups of distinction and persons and groups who have rendered eminent services to the district.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 outlines that an authority can award the freedom of the district to persons of distinction and persons who in the opinion of the Council have rendered eminent services to the District.

1.2 Council is asked to consider awarding the Honorary Freedom of the District to Number 51 Squadron of The Royal Airforce and The Yorkshire Regiment of The British Army in gratitude for their service during World War 2 and their continued connection to the town of Selby and ongoing ceremonial role in the Armistice Day Ceremony in Selby Cemetery and the Remembrance Day Ceremony at Selby Abbey.

2. Proposed Freeman

2.1 Number 51 Squadron of the Royal Airforce was formed in Thetford in 1916 and is currently based at RAF Waddingham. Number 51 Squadron defended the United Kingdom against German Zeppelin raids in World War 1 before disbanding in 1919. The unit reconvened in 1937 and was active in World War 2 from the day war was declared on 1 September 1939 and remains active to this day.

2.2 During World War 2, Number 51 Squadron carried out leaflet drops, raids on radar sites and patrolled against U-Boats in the Bay of Biscay. In January 1944 Number 51 Squadron flew as part of No. 4 Group RAF in RAF Bomber Command's strategic bombing offensive programme operating from RAF Snaith in East Yorkshire. It flew primarily against the German V-Weapon sites and was based at Snaith for the remainder of the war. In 1944 'C' Flight of Number 51 Squadron moved to form 578 Squadron at Burn Airfield in the Selby District and were based there for the remainder of the war. 51 Squadron remains active at the hub of the RAF's Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance fleet.

2.3 Number 51 Squadron has been nominated by Ye Fraternitie of Olde Selebians, a local interest group, due to its connection to the Selby District. As well as being based in Burn during World War 2, many crew trained at RAF Riccall, a former Royal Airforce airfield located in the Selby District used as a satellite to RAF Marston Moor between 1942 and 1945. Multiple Selby residents were members of the unit, including recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, Ken Dean of Riccall and seven veterans are interred in the War Graves section of Selby Cemetery.

2.4 Number 51 squadron veterans and serving personnel return to Selby each year to support both the Armistice Day Ceremony in Selby Cemetery and the Remembrance Day Ceremony at Selby Abbey. The service of Number 51 Squadron and its importance to Selby has been recognised with their battle flag displayed above the altar at Selby Abbey and a memorial in the grounds by the West Door.

2.5 The Yorkshire Regiment is an infantry regiment of the British Army, created by the amalgamation of three historic regiments in 2006 with a recruitment area covering the ceremonial counties of the Ridings of Yorkshire, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

2.6 The Yorkshire Regiment has been nominated by Ye Fraternitie of Olde Selbians, a interest history group, due to its connection to the Selby District. Veterans of the historic regiments making up the Yorkshire Regiment include past residents of Selby District with their names recorded on war memorials at Selby Abbey and throughout the Selby District.

2.7 Ye Fraternitie of Olde Selbians and Yorkshire Regiment veterans went on to start the Armistice Day ceremony in Selby Cemetery and the Yorkshire Regiment sends

veterans and serving personnel each year to support both the Armistice Day Ceremony in Selby Cemetery and the Remembrance Day Ceremony at Selby Abbey.

- 2.8** In recognition of their service and connection to the Selby District, Council is asked to consider awarding the groups, the Honorary Freedom of the District.

3. Alternative Options Considered

Not appointing Honorary Freeman status would fail to recognise the eminent service of the groups.

4. Implications

4.1 Legal Implications

Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 outlines the requirements and the process for granting the freedom of the district. For the honour to be approved, Council will have to vote with a two thirds majority at the meeting for a resolution to that effect. If the honour is granted, Number 51 Squadron of The Royal Airforce and The Yorkshire Regiment of The British Army will be able to use the title of Honorary Freemen of the District. Under section 33 of The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008 a group who, before the reorganisation date has been admitted as an honorary freeman of a local government area that is abolished by a section 7 order, shall, on that date, be treated as having been admitted as an honorary freeman of the area which, on the reorganisation date, comprises or includes the abolished area, and for which, on and after that date, there is a single tier of local government. This means that from 1 April 2023, should the groups be conferred the title, they would become Honorary Freeman of the area covered by the incoming local authority, North Yorkshire Council.

4.2 Financial Implications

There are costs associated with purchasing a certificate to be given to a representative of each group and of catering a reception following any conferral. These costs will be met from the Democratic Services budget.

4.3 Policy and Risk Implications

Not applicable.

4.4 Corporate Plan Implications

Not applicable.

4.5 Resource Implications

Not applicable.

4.6 Other Implications

Not applicable.

4.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1** The Council can consider whether to confer the title of Honorary Freeman upon the Number 51 Squadron of The Royal Airforce and The Yorkshire Regiment of The British Army in the recommendation in recognition of the eminent service to the District Council that they have rendered. For the honours to be approved Councillors will have to vote with a two thirds majority at the meeting for a resolution to that effect.

6. Background Documents

None.

7. Appendices

None.

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