
RENEWAL OF FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor John Williams, Leader of the Council

Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider renewing the Freedom of the Borough previously conferred by the Council on the Light Infantry to their successors, The Rifles.

Summary

2. This report seeks Members approval to renewing the Freedom of the Borough (approved by Council in April 1995) to The Rifles, the successor body to the Light Infantry. The renewal of the Freedom of the Borough would co-incide with a proposal to have a 'Freedom March' through the Town Centre on Wednesday, 8 September, 2010 to welcome The Rifles Regiment's return to the U.K. from operations abroad.
3. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to pass an appropriate resolution (passed by not less than two thirds of the Members present voting) to confer the Freedom of the Borough at a Special meeting convened for that purpose.

Recommendations

4. Members are asked to :-
 - (a) agree to the request (with not less than two thirds of the Members present at the meeting voting in favour of the resolution) and confer the Freedom of the Borough of Darlington on The Rifles; and
 - (b) approve the expenditure of £10,000 as detailed in paragraph 24 below.

Reasons

5. To continue links with the successor organisation to the Light Infantry.
6. To comply with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services

Background Paper

Letter from the Regimental Secretary to The Rifles dated 25th March, 2010.

Linda Todd: Extension 2354

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no issues in relation to Health and Wellbeing.
Sustainability	There are no issues in relation to Sustainability
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All Wards are effected equally.
Groups Affected	There is no impact on any particular group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report requests additional funding as there is no current budget allocation.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not adversely impact on the Strategy
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.

MAIN REPORT

Information

7. The Council conferred the Freedom of the Borough on the Durham Light Infantry at a Ceremony held on 16th March, 1996.
8. On 1st February, 2007, a reorganisation of the Infantry resulted in the amalgamation of four regiments which included the Light Infantry. The new Regiment was named The Rifles. The Regiment now consists of five regular and two territorial battalions and three independent territorial sub units.
9. Although the new Regiment's headquarters is based in Winchester it is supported by 'Rifles' Offices in each of its four former counties. It continues to recruit in the North East with a large proportion of its personnel recruited from within the Borough.
10. Since the formation of The Rifles three years ago the Regiment has been continually deployed on operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Freedom of the Borough

11. The Regimental Secretary of The Rifles has stated that the Regiment would be 'honoured and deeply privileged' if the Council would consider renewing the Freedom of the Borough from the Light Infantry to their successors, The Rifles.
12. In September this year, The Rifles are proposing to hold a number of Freedom Parades in the North (Darlington, Stockton-on-Tees, Sunderland and Wakefield). It is proposed that the Parade in Darlington be held on 8th September.
13. It is suggested that the Freedom of the Borough could be conferred on The Rifles at the end of the Parade through the Town Centre, which will culminate on the Market Square.
14. The Freedom of the Borough is the highest civic distinction that can be conferred upon individuals or collective bodies in recognition of outstanding service or particular civic association.
15. The power to award the Freedom of the Borough is contained in the Local Government Act 1972. Section 249 of that requires that an appropriate resolution is passed by not less than two thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council specially convened for that purpose. Those awarded honorary freedom are required to be persons of distinction or persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough.

Freedom Parade

16. As stated in paragraph 12 above, The Rifles will be conducting a number of Freedom Parades within the North as part of a 'North East Festival'. C Company, 3 Rifles, has been nominated as the Freedom Parade Guard and will be supported by The Rifles Band and Bugles and the local Regimental Association, if available on the day.

17. 3 Rifles are currently deployed in the Upper Helmand Valley in Afghanistan and will be returning home in the near future.
18. It is proposed that the 'Darlington' Parade will be the first in the North East on Wednesday, 8 September commencing at 1.00 p.m. It will begin in Commercial Street Car Park, and then march along Northgate, Prebend Row, West Row and end on the Market Square. The Rifles march at 140 paces to the minute and their motto is 'Swift and Bold'.
19. The Parade will be inspected by the Mayor on the Market Square before being officially being granted the renewal of the Freedom of the Borough with the presentation of a Scroll to mark the occasion. The Rifles will present a Silver Bugle to the Borough in recognition of the occasion.
20. Following the Ceremony, a reception for those involved in the Parade and guests will take place in Central Hall at the Dolphin Centre.

Support

21. It is anticipated that there will be huge support for The Rifles Parade from residents of the Borough and further afield. It is suggested that the Town Centre Manager ask for support (in terms of decoration of shops/premises) of those premises on the parade route. Schools within the Borough will be requested to allow pupils to observe 'the homecoming' of The Rifles and assemble at points on the parade route or on the Market Square.
22. The Rifles' Charities are also running a fund raising campaign to raise £1 million in 2010 and are proposing to raise funds for The Rifles at the Parades in the North East. They will be making separate applications to the Council for these collections.

4th Mechanized Brigade

23. As previously publicised within the Borough, there will also be a home coming parade in Darlington to recognise the work of the soldiers of the 4th Mechanized Brigade, based at Catterick Garrison. It is anticipated that that Parade will be late in 2010/early2011. Further information regarding the details of this Parade will be circulated to Members when known.

Financial Implications

24. There is currently no provision in the 2010/11 revenue budget for the Freedom of the Borough Ceremony. Council is asked to approve additional funding of £10,000 for the Ceremony, provision of a Scroll and a Reception for The Rifles. It is anticipated that the additional funding will also cover the costs of a Reception for the homecoming parade later in the year for the 4th Mechanized Brigade.

Summary

25. Support for the Armed Forces at the end of tours of duty is important for both the regiment and their families. The public has this shown support in other parts of the Country and the homecoming parades detailed in this report will give the people of Darlington the opportunity to thank those on parade, pay tribute to those still on duty and remember those who have lost their lives whilst on operations.