

AGENDA ITEM 4

REPORT TO SPECIAL COUNCIL

DATE 21 JANUARY 2009

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF
LAW AND DEMOCRACY**

**PROPOSAL TO CONFER THE HONOUR OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH TO
THE RIFLES**

Summary

To propose the granting of the Freedom of the Borough to The Rifles

To consider a request made by The Rifles to exercise the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010. This in practice would probably mean a Regimental march through the streets with bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:-

1. The Council confirms that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon The Rifles following the merger of the Light Infantry, the Devon and Dorset Light Infantry, the Royal Gloucester, Berkshire and Wiltshire Light Infantry and the Royal Green Jackets;
2. That their name be placed on the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough;
3. That The Rifles are presented with a sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution at an appropriate occasion; and that
4. That The Rifles be requested to exercise the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010, with the suggestion that the Freedom is linked to an existing appropriate event if possible, for example Remembrance Sunday.

Background

1. The Mayor has received correspondence from the Rifles Durham Office informing him of the reorganisation of the Army and that The Light Infantry are now part of a new Regiment, The Rifles. They hope that Stockton wishes to continue with its strong association with its Local Infantry Regiment and that The Rifles would like to be requested to exercise the Freedom of the town at an opportune date during their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010.

DETAIL

2. The Light Infantry were granted Freedom of The Borough of Stockton in 1977, minute reference no 39 is shown at **Appendix 1**. The Light Infantry have now become part of a new Regiment as of 1 February 2007. They merged with three other Regiments - the Devon and Dorset Light Infantry, the Royal Gloucester, Berkshire and Wiltshire Light Infantry and the Royal Green Jackets to become a new Regiment - The Rifles. The Rifles will be the largest Infantry Regiment in the British Army.
3. A large proportion of The Rifles are from the North East, a fair number from Stockton. There are 5 regular Battalions in the Commando, Light, Mechanised and Armoured Infantry roles. There is also 2 Territorial Army Battalions with additional Companies in Bishop Auckland and Shrewsbury. The Regiment has served in Iraq and, at the time of the letter, were preparing for operations in Afghanistan.
4. The decision now needs to be made as to whether and how the Freedom Rights should be granted to The Rifles.
5. Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, allows the Council of a district having the status of a city, borough or royal borough, by a 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, to admit to be honorary freeman of the city, borough or royal borough persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the city, borough or royal borough.
6. Should it be agreed that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon The Rifles, then the presentation of a sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution should be considered. The Mayor as civic head could present it to an appropriate representative of the Regiment at a future meeting of Council or during the exercise of the Freedom in 2009/10.
7. Should it be agreed that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon The Rifles, then consideration needs to be given as to whether The Rifles are requested to exercise the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010. It could be suggested to The Rifles that the Freedom is linked to an existing appropriate event if possible, for example Remembrance Sunday.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The Council will be required to comply with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 in granting Freedom of the Borough. This report and its consideration at a meeting of the Council specially convened for that purpose will assist in fulfilling that requirement.
9. The costs of adding the name of The Rifles to the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough is approximately £100. A sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution is

in the form of a scroll. Scroll prices vary from £500 for a plain type up to £1,000 for a more detailed type. Costs are to be met from the existing budget for the Law and Democratic Services Department (Civic) budget for 2008/09

10. Consideration would need to be given to costs arising from the Rifles exercising the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010. The costs depend upon the type of event that will fit in with their Regimental programme for 2009 and 2010.
11. Hospitality costs would depend upon how many of the Company will be available to attend. The full company would be in the region of 300 soldiers whereas 2 guards would be 60 soldiers. Officers from The Rifles and Councillors and Officers from SBC would add to this number.
12. If the Freedom March is added to an existing event where the road closure is already organised then the anticipated cost would be nil. For example the Remembrance Sunday Parade already takes place and has the assistance of the Police who use their powers to close the road, follow the parade and stop traffic when appropriate. The road closure is also in place at Mayor's Sunday in June each year.
13. If the Freedom March is organised as a separate event the associated costs could potentially be in the region of £2,000 and would have to include;
 - Any costs associated with the police using their powers to close the road and provide traffic control
 - Any legal costs associated with applying for the road closure
 - Traffic management to physically close the road
 - Diversion route signing along the identified route
 - Publicity including the requirement that the closure is publicised at every bus stop in the high street
14. Also to be taken into consideration is the possible inconvenience to other road users and members of the public, due to bus services being cancelled and subsequent passenger inconvenience. The effects of this could be mitigated by holding the event on a Sunday.

CONSULTATION

15. Consultation has been undertaken with CMT and Group Leaders.

Head of Democratic Services

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Minute reference 39, Council 22 May 1977

The Light Infantry – Conferring of Honours

At a special meeting of the Council held on 22nd May 1977 a motion moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor J H Cooke and RESOLVED unanimously that in appreciation of the splendid traditions of the Light Infantry and that as an expression of the admiration of the peoples of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees for the Regiment's great and glorious achievements the Council do confer upon the Regiment the Freedom of entry into the Borough on ceremonial occasions with Colours flying, bands playing and bugles sounding.

The Mayor presented to the Colonel of the Regiment (Major general D N H Tyacke, CB, OBE, the Deed of Grant conferring the rights on the Light Infantry together with a silver bugle to be known as "The Stockton Bugle".

Major general Tyacke presented to the Mayor, who received them on behalf of the Council, portraits of Her Majesty the Queen Mother (Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment) and HRH Princess Alexandra (Deputy Colonel-in-Chief).