

**AGENDA ITEM 3**

**REPORT TO SPECIAL COUNCIL**

**DATE 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2011**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF LAW  
AND DEMOCRACY**

**PROPOSAL TO CONFER THE HONOUR OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH  
TO THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AND THE ROYAL ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL  
ENGINEERS**

**SUMMARY**

To propose the granting of the Freedom of the Borough to the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME).

To consider requests made by the Branch President of the Royal Air Force Association and the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:-

1. The Council confirms that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon the RAF and the REME;
2. That their names be placed on the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough;
3. That the RAF and REME are presented with a sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution at an appropriate occasion;
4. The RAF and REME are requested to exercise the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programmes for 2012, with the suggestion that the Freedom parades are linked to Armed Forces week 2012.

**BACKGROUND**

1. A letter has been received from the Branch President of The Royal Air Force Association requesting that the Council bestow the Freedom of Stockton to the RAF in the not too distant future. The letter explains that the link between Stockton and the RAF should be bonded further as they have been associated together since the 1930's and have historically attended each others parades and ceremonies. **Appendix 1**
2. A request has also been received from the Branch Secretary of the Teesside branch of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Association as the unit have now made Catterick their home after returning from many years in Germany. The unit do not have any freedom associations with any borough in the north and wish to make Stockton their home. **Appendix 2**

3. Council are recommended to confer the freedom of the Borough of Stockton on Tees on the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and that the Freedom Events become part of the forthcoming Armed Forces Day celebrations in 2012.

## **DETAIL**

4. The nearest RAF site is situated at Leeming near Northallerton and its primary role is to train for, deliver and support UK and expeditionary air operations. It was originally developed during the late 1930's and was used as a heavy bomber base, night-fighter base and a flying training school before it underwent major redevelopment in the mid -80s.
5. There was a former RAF Station located at Thornaby. The station was created in the mid 1920s and was used mostly for reconnaissance work, anti shipping strikes, and attacks on enemy airfields.
6. The station was engaged in air-sea rescue work from 1943 and the aircrew developed a means of dropping emergency supplies to their ditched colleagues, using a receptacle which was later to be widely known as the "Thornaby Bag".
7. The airfield remained as a Training and Coastal Command base until it closed to flying in October of 1958
8. In 2007 a full-size replica Spitfire aircraft was erected on the roundabout at the junction of Thornaby Road, Bader Avenue and Trenchard Avenue.
9. The One Close Support Battalion REME is based in Catterick. The Battalion moved from Osnabruck, Germany to Catterick in April 2008 and expect to stay in Catterick indefinitely. The Battalion has a diverse and varied history which dates back from WW2 when 12 Infantry Brigade Workshop was formed in March 1943. It is currently made up of three companies: 4 Armoured Company, 12 Armoured Company and 24 field Company. The Battalion maintains and repairs all land based equipment for all units within 4<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade and Catterick Garrison and also provides support to a wider geographic region including all local TA units. They have recently returned from operations in Afghanistan.
10. 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.
11. Should it be agreed that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon the RAF and the REME, 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 Regiments at a future meeting of Council or during the exercise of the Freedom in 2012.
12. Should it be agreed that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon the RAF and the REME, then they should be invited to exercise the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programmes for 2012. It could be suggested to them that the Freedom events are linked to Armed Forces Day.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. 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.
14. The costs of adding the name of the RAF and REME to the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough is approximately £200 in total. A sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution is in the form of a scroll. Scroll prices vary from £500 up to £1000 for a more detailed type. Costs are to be met from the civic budget for Law and Democracy for 2012/13.
15. Costs arising from the RAF and REME exercising the Freedom of the Town at an opportune date during their Regimental programmes will be met from Corporate Revenue Balances.

## **CONSULTATION**

16. Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team and Group Leaders.

### **Head of Democratic Services**

**Name of Contact Officer:** Margaret Waggott  
**Telephone No:** 01642 527064  
**Email Address:** [margaret.waggott@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.waggott@stockton.gov.uk)