

SPECIAL COUNCIL

25 JANUARY 2018

CONFERMENT OF HONORARY FREEDOM TO C COMPANY, 3RD BATTALION OF PRINCESS OF WALES'S ROYAL REGIMENT

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader of the Council
Report from: Perry Holmes, Chief Legal Officer
Author: Jane Ringham, Head of Elections & Member Services

Summary

This report has been prepared at the request of the Leader and invites the Council to consider a proposal to confer the honorary freedom of the borough on C Company, 3rd Battalion of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The conferring of honorary freedom of the borough is a matter for Council.

2. Background

2.1 The honorary 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, ensuring the honourable perpetuation of their memory within the community.

2.2 Entry to the roll of freedom is usually accompanied by the presentation to the recipient of a scroll embodying details of the formal Council resolution.

2.3 The power to award honorary freedom of the borough is contained in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009). Section 249 of that Act 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 the 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.

3. History of C Company, 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and contribution to the life of Medway

- 3.1 Our armed forces act in the highest traditions of our country in the conduct of their Operations. Reservists and Regular servicemen and women share the burden and risks associated with service, doing so in the most difficult circumstances. The Army Reserve is the largest of the Reserve Forces, and provides support to the Regular Army at home and overseas, and throughout its history almost every major operation has seen reservists operate alongside their Regular counterparts.
- 3.2 Kent and the South East is particularly honoured to have the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (PWRR) stationed in its area. "The Tigers", as they are known affectionately have a history dating back to The Buffs in 1572, and then locally in the 50th of Foot (Royal West Kent's) in 1756 which was the first infantry regiment of the line, traditionally raised in Kent. This makes it one of the most senior regiments in the British Army and has provided distinguished service since then. After several re-organisations and mergers it was named after Diana, Princess of Wales. The "Tigers" nickname harks back to one of the predecessor regiments; the 67th South Hampshire's who were awarded the use of the image of a Royal Bengal Tiger on their colours in recognition of their 21 years active service in India. They embody the virtues of courage, self-discipline and loyalty. They have a fierce pride in their connections to the south east of England.
- 3.3 Just before World War 1, the 3rd (Reserves) battalion of the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment were formed as a training Regiment based in Chattenden and then went onto Rochester in November 1914, and in the summer of 1918 formed part of the Thames and Medway Garrison. The 9th (Reserves) battalion were formed at Chatham and became part of the 93rd Brigade.
- 3.4 In terms of individuals with a link to Medway whose achievements have been recognised, six members of PWRR's forbear regiments have been awarded Victoria Crosses (VCs) in conflicts ranging from the Crimean War, through WWI to WWII. These include Colonel Donald J Dean of The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment who was awarded the VC near Lens in France during WW1 and later became a Deputy Lieutenant of Kent as well as Sergeant Thomas James Harris also of The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment who was born in Halling in 1892 and his parents both grew up in Rochester. Sergeant Harris was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross after he and his section captured a machine gun position. He then single handedly attacked a further two enemy machine gun positions, taking the first before being killed by the latter.
- 3.5 Company C of 3 Battalion PWRR, the Army Reserve Battalion, have been stationed at Fort Clarence in Rochester since 2006, and they continue the proud record of achievements that include recent operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq in support of the Regular Army and Cyprus supporting the United Nations mission. Officers and soldiers of the Battalion take time away from their normal civilian employment, to train every week and one or two weekends each month as well as participating annually in a two week training period. The links with Medway continue with 38 Reserves currently coming from Medway with another 11 going through the recruitment process.

- 3.6 On behalf of the people of Medway, the Council wishes to express admiration at the bravery, endurance and commitment of the servicemen and women of C Company, 3rd Battalion. In recognition of the eminent services the men and women of the Company have made to Medway, the Council is minded to grant the freedom of Medway to C Company, 3rd Battalion of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. This will cement and foster the close and longstanding bonds of friendship and mutual respect existing between the Company, Medway Council and the people of Medway.
- 3.7 If approved, it is the intention to hold a Freedom March through Chatham Town Centre and have a ceremony for the formal presentation of the Freedom scroll on Sunday 1 July 2018.

4. Risk management

- 4.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 Costs of in the region of £16,000 will be incurred relating to the proposed Freedom March and the preparation of a scroll setting out the resolution of the Council plus the casket in which it will be presented to the Commanding Officer. These costs will mostly fall in the financial year 2018-19.
- 5.2 Provision of £6,000 will also need to be made annually in case the PoWRR wish to exercise their right to march, with fixed bayonets, through the Borough. This will start from and include the financial year 2019-20.
- 5.3 Budget provision has been set aside in the Medium Term Financial Strategy in the Festival, Arts, Theatres and Events Division for 2018-19. It is understood that the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment have very kindly offered to meet the costs of the refreshments after the Freedom parade.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The power to confer the honorary freedom of the borough of Medway on persons of distinction or persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the borough, is contained within section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009). Section 249 of the Act also empowers the Council to spend a reasonable sum for the purpose of presenting an address or casket to a person upon whom the honorary freedom of the borough has been conferred.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 That, in pursuance of the power vested in it by virtue of section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Council consider whether to agree to confer the honorary freedom of the borough on the Commanding Officer and the servicemen and women of C Company, 3rd Battalion of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment from time to time, in perpetuity, in the interests of cementing and fostering the close and longstanding bonds of friendship and mutual respect existing between the Company, Medway Council and the people of Medway.

Lead officer contact

Jane Ringham, Head of Elections & Member Services, Gun Wharf,
T: 01634 332864
E: jane.ringham@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background papers

None