

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

HELD AT 11.05 A.M. ON THURSDAY, 27 MAY 2021

ONLINE 'VIRTUAL' MEETING - [HTTPS://TOWERHAMLETS.PUBLIC-I.TV/CORE/PORTAL/HOME](https://towerhamlets.public-i.tv/core/portal/home)

Members Present:

Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain Speaker of the Council
(Chair)
Councillor Sabina Akhtar
Councillor Peter Golds
Councillor Abdul Mukit MBE
Councillor Victoria Obaze
Councillor Motin Uz-Zaman

Co-opted Members Present:

Councillor Asma Begum
Councillor Rachel Blake
Councillor Sirajul Islam
Lesley Morgan

Officers Present:

Patricia Attawia –
Muhammed Uddin –
Matthew Mannion –

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of:

- Councillor Denise Jones
- Mike Smith

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

3. UNRESTRICTED MINUTES

DECISION

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2021 be approved subject to the addition of Mike Smith to the list of attendees.

4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 Freedom of the Borough nomination process and nomination form including venue and award proposals

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and handed over to Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, to administratively run the meeting and introduce the report.

Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, presented a report on the Freedom of the Borough nomination process and form, including venue and award proposals.

Co-opted Members

The Panel confirmed the appointment of Leslie Morgan OBE DL as an additional co-opted Member.

Nomination Process and form Timetable

The Panel reviewed the updated timetable reflecting comments from the previous meeting and discussed concerns around the uncertainties of the pandemic in late autumn/winter, and that delays could result in the process being impacted by Purdah.

The view was taken that it should be brought forward to September. The actual date will depend upon the number of nominations and how complicated the process is to agree on which ones to propose. It was unlikely that the process will be completed in time for early September, a late September/early October ceremony was being considered. This may also be influenced by the availability of the chosen venue.

The panel agreed they would like the ceremony to be held separately from the September Full Council meeting.

Process and Publicity

Panel agreed they wanted much more publicity than the last time the process was run and would also like the advert and nomination form to be advertised in BME print and electronic media. They also commented that they should take responsibility as community leaders to get the advert to community networks and grassroots organisations who have connections and will know people who should be nominated, to ensure we receive a diverse round of nominations.

The advert was discussed, and it was felt that it needed to be more exciting and community based, making it clear that the council is actively seeking nominations from communities that haven't received a Freedom of the Borough nomination.

Nomination Form

The panel considered the nomination form and thought some of the context from the advert could be brought into it around the sort of people we are seeking nominations for, and to make sure we have a good cross section.

The issue of flexibility around the deadline was raised, with observations that the summer period can be quiet.

There was a discussion about providing assistance in completing the form to ensure people can articulate clearly the outstanding contribution made by the person they are nominating. It was felt this could lead to a very high number of nominations being received and high expectations in the community, which would result in disappointment when it becomes clear that very few awards were being given out.

The Panel agreed that nominators could approach organisations for help to clearly set out the achievements of the person they are nominating, but also that it should be made clear in the advert how rare the awards are and that very few are given out.

Venue

Panel confirmed they wish to hold the ceremony away from the Council Chamber. It was mentioned that other boroughs do theirs at weekends and this could also be considered.

Further venues the Panel discussed were the Tower of London and St. George's Town Hall.

Scrolls

A variety of options were presented. It was confirmed that the option chosen last year was the computer-generated scroll in a frame, and that the cost is similar this year.

It was proposed that a book style award be considered with the list of achievements of the person being nominated and some photos.

DECISION:

1. To agree to the appointment of Leslie Morgan OBE DL as a non-voting co-opted member of the Panel
2. To hold the ceremony in late September/early October, separately from the September Full Council Meeting
3. To advertise in BME media sources to ensure wider circulation and encourage nominations from communities who have not nominated previously
4. To ensure the advert and nomination form guidance emphasise how rare the award is and how few are given out to avoid disappointment
5. To consider further venue and award options and discuss at the next meeting of the Panel
6. The next meeting of the Panel to be arranged for the end of July

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS CONSIDERED TO BE URGENT

Nil items.

The meeting ended at 11.39 a.m.

Chair, Councillor Mohammed Ahbab Hossain
Freedom of the Borough