

Non-Executive Report of the: Freedom of the Borough Tuesday, 7 September 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Part exempt (Exempt Appendices)
Freedom of the Borough: Membership, Nomination Shortlist and Ceremony Venue	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Patricia Attawia, Democratic Services Team Leader (Civic and Members)
Wards affected	All Wards

Executive Summary

Nominations for the Freedom of the Borough award closed on Monday 2nd August and the final list of nominations was circulated to the panel on 11th August for their consideration. A link to vote for the nominee(s) they wish to award the Freedom of the Borough to was sent to each panel member on 19 August 2021. It is for the Panel to now review the results and decide upon the final nominees to put forward to Council.

A number of venues have been discussed for holding the Freedom of the Borough ceremony. A table of venue hire and other costs has been drawn up to assist the panel in making a decision.

Since the last Panel meeting a new political group has been established on the Council. The Panel is therefore asked to agree to the appointment of a representative of that group onto the Panel in line with the Terms of Reference.

Recommendations:

The Freedom of the Borough Panel is recommended to:

1. Review the voting results and decide on the final shortlist of nominees to put forward to Council for the Freedom of the Borough award.
2. Consider all the information on potential venues for where the Freedom of the Borough ceremony will be hosted.
3. To agree to appoint Councillor Kabir Ahmed to the Panel as the representative of the Aspire political group.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This report is presented to enable Panel Members to review the voting results and make a final decision on which nominations should be put forward to Council for the Freedom of the Borough Award.
- 1.2 The panel requested further information on potential venues for the award ceremony. This report provides an update.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Panel may propose alternative options for the venues and/or nominations or could choose not to continue with the process.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Panel met on the 29 July 2021 to review the 81 nominations for the Freedom of the Borough award received at that date.
- 3.2 They also considered the information provided on potential venues for holding the Freedom of the Borough ceremony.

Membership

- 3.3 Since the last Panel meeting a new political group (Aspire) has been established on the Council. The Panel is therefore asked to agree to the appointment of a representative of that group onto the Panel in line with the Terms of Reference.

Nomination Shortlist

- 3.4 At the above meeting the panel chose a provisional shortlist of 12 nominees from the 81 nominations received. As the meeting was before the final closing date for nominations, these were circulated to the panel once again together with the additional nominations received up to the final deadline. A final total of 20 nominations were sent to the panel for their consideration on 11 August. The Panel agreed that sufficient good-quality nominations had been received so there was no need to extend the nominations deadline.
- 3.5 As discussed at the 29 July meeting, panel members were asked to vote for the nominee(s) of their choice to provide an initial guide as to the best candidates. This information could then be considered by the next meeting to help guide the decision-making.
- 3.6 The candidates were presented in a random order, for members to rank from their first choice downwards. Voting could be carried out for all candidates or

just a subset, selecting N/A for the others. Each candidate was given a weighted average based on total voting

- 3.7 The results of this exercise are presented in Appendix 1 (Exempt).
- 3.8 These results are not final but rather give an indication of panel members' views and are open to further discussion. It should also be noted that not all Panel Members were able to cast their votes during the time available and also that some Members may not have felt able to vote for certain candidates if they had a conflict of interests. For all of these reasons the voting should not be considered definitive but as a useful guide.
- 3.9 At the meeting, if a Panel member is related to a nominee or feel they have a close business or personal relationship with a nominee then they should not take part in discussions or consideration of that nomination.
- 3.10 In making their final decision the panel should also consider whether the nominee's contribution was:
 - Across the whole borough
 - For a long period of time
 - Over and above their paid job.

Ceremony Venue

- 3.11 The panel has shown an interest in holding the Freedom of the Borough ceremony away from the Town Hall and at an extraordinary Council meeting rather than at a scheduled full council meeting.
- 3.12 This has additional cost implications in terms of venue hire, catering and technical requirements.
- 3.13 A table of potential venues and associated costs was presented to the Panel at the last meeting. This has been updated and summarised in the attached Appendix 2. (exempt).
- 3.14 A note has been added to indicate which venues are accessible.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is important that the Panel consider equalities matters when discussing the nominations received, especially that the nominees support communities across the whole borough.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 None specific to this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There are no additional direct financial implications arising from this report. Any costs will be found from within the existing Speaker's budget.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 Appendix 1 shows details of voting patterns and information which relates to individuals and is therefore exempt information. It is in the public interest that discussions relating to the information should be able to occur in a free and frank manner. Therefore, whilst there is considerable public interest in knowing the information shown at appendix 1 this is outweighed by the public interest in maintaining the exemption in order to allow free and frank discussions to occur.

7.2 Appendix 2 contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of venue hire organisations. This is exempt information. In order to have a proper discussion and for panellists to be able to speak frankly and openly about the proposals without risk of breaching a commercial confidence it is in the public interest that the exemption be maintained and the interest is great enough to outweigh the public interest in knowing the information.

7.3 Following consideration of the nominations the panel should only propose for honorary freeman or honorary freewoman, nominations of people of distinction and or people who in the panel's opinion have rendered eminent services to the area of the London Borough Of Tower Hamlets.

7.4 The panel does not have to recommend all nominees who satisfy the criteria referred to at 7.2. The panel also does not have to simply follow the voting information. The panel members have a legal discretion to include for final nominations those that they think fit. However, a complete departure from the voting information may be considered to be irrational and therefore written reasons for any final decisions should be kept.

7.5 The Head Of Democratic Services already has the delegated authority to approve the incurrence of a reasonable level of expenditure on the presentation of caskets and other such awards. However, seeking the views of the panel assists the demonstration of exercising this authority in a reasonable manner.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Ranked list of nominees (Exempt)
- Appendix 2 – Information on potential ceremony venues (Exempt)

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None.

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A