

<p><b>Council</b></p> <p>23 May 2018</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Asmat Hussain – Corporate Director, Governance</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted</p>
<p><b>Report of the Freedom of the Borough Panel: Nomination for Freedom of the Borough</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Committee Services Manager Rushena Miah, Committee Services Officer
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards

### **Executive Summary**

This report presents a nominee for the Freedom of the Borough Award. It outlines the policy context for awarding a Freedom of the Borough and explains how the process for nomination and selection was carried out. It asks Council to make a decision on whether the nominee selected by the Freedom of the Borough Panel should be awarded the honorary title.

### **Recommendations:**

The Council is recommended to:

1. Award Commander John Ludgate the Freedom of the Borough.

#### **1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 The Council is empowered by section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to admit as Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewomen of the borough 'persons of distinction and persons who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the borough'.
- 1.2 In November 2017, the Council's cross-party Freedom of the Borough Panel began the process of seeking and reviewing nominations with the intention of awarding a Freedom of the Borough. The Panel was chaired by the Speaker of the Council, Councillor Sabina Akhtar and also included the Mayor, previous Speakers and co-opted Members.
- 1.3 The Panel received six nominations and determined that out of the six, one nomination met the criteria to award a Freedom of the Borough. The shortlisted nominee was Commander John Ludgate.

## **2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The Council could decide to not award John Ludgate the Freedom of the Borough.

## **3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The award of the honorary freedom does not in itself confer any rights on the recipient but conferring the title of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman is the highest honour that the Council of a borough can bestow and as such is given only rarely. In Tower Hamlets, no such award has been made since 1999.

### **3.2 Criteria for bestowing the honour:**

The Freedom of the Borough must be awarded at a specifically convened meeting of the Council. As the award is rarely bestowed it should be reserved only for the most exceptional persons. The award should recognise exceptional achievement or service by an individual that has, for example:

- Demonstrated exceptional achievements or service to the community.
- Made a real difference in their field of work or their community.
- Brought distinction to the borough or enhanced its reputation.
- Exemplified sustained and selfless voluntary service.
- Demonstrated innovation or entrepreneurship which has delivered benefits to the Borough.
- Carried the respect of and inspired his/her peers.
- Significantly improved the lot of those who have suffered disadvantage.
- Promoted community cohesion
- Contributed to the borough beyond the call of duty in a way that stands out above others.

### **3.3. About the nominee Commander John McKay LUDGATE, RD\*, DL RNR**

Commander John Ludgate is the former Deputy Lieutenant of Tower Hamlets. He is a Royal Naval Officer and was a chartered accountant with Barclays Bank where he advised small local start-ups.

John's father was a Master Mariner, who sailed the Bay of Bengal, Chittagong, Dhaka and Calcutta. John himself was born in Rangoon. He followed his father's example and joined the Royal Naval Reserve in 1959. Between 1992-1995 he was in Command of the HMS President in Wapping. John retired from his career in accounting in 1996 to pursue voluntary endeavours. He is passionate about protecting and serving communities, youth education and supporting young people to fulfil their potential in the uniformed services.

John's interests include sailing, Scottish country dancing, Maritime History and the National Maritime Museum and Observatory.

Each Deputy Lieutenant is responsible for one of the 32 boroughs of greater London and is appointed by the Lord Lieutenant. One of the key functions of the role is to supervise functions attended by the Royal Family. John was appointed Deputy Lieutenant by the Lord Lieutenant Sir Ken Ollis in 1994.

John's duties as Deputy Lieutenant have included overseeing royal visits in the borough, advising the Mayor, Speaker and councillors on protocol and engagement with the royals and validating awards such as the Queen's Award for Enterprise and Voluntary Service.

John had garnered the respect and admiration of many colleagues at Tower Hamlets. Here is what a few Members had to say about him:

**Councillor Denise Jones:** *John Ludgate served the Queen in a voluntary and unpaid capacity as her Deputy Lord Lieutenant in Tower Hamlets for 22 years, he has always behaved in a professional dignified manner.*

*He was also very supportive of the Outdoor Activity Centre at Shadwell Basin and of fundraising for the preservation of the national historic steamship SS Robin built in 1890. His interest in naval history influenced the placing of the historic ship's bell from HMS Crane in the foyer of Mulberry Place.*

*He was a strong advocate for encouraging young people in the borough to engage with the navy and ships, and with the Territorial Army. When I was Leader of the council he invited me with local young people to the shore establishment of the Royal Navy Reserve, HMS President in my ward in Wapping to find out what a career in the Navy is all about.*

**Lesley Pavitt- former Speaker:** *I could not have had a kinder and informative man to guide me through the intricacies of the role. He was very keen that youngsters in the borough were able to have opportunities and was a great supporter of the various cadet Corps and encouraged me to be involved. He had a great knowledge of many organisations in Tower Hamlets, it helped that he had been based at HMS President for many years.*

**Sabina Akhtar – Speaker:** *I first met John around 2010 at a Civic Award Ceremony. I was interested in politics and used to attend Council meetings and events to observe the democratic process. I was not an elected councillor at the time but I recall speaking to John and him explaining what his role was as Deputy Lieutenant. He played a role in encouraging me to enter politics because he said he could see me 'going far' which was a heartening compliment.*

*When I was elected Speaker, John helped me understand council protocol and procedures. This was extremely useful in my role as Speaker because it carries a ceremonial significance. John was extremely knowledgeable about British history and customs so I felt like I could always go to him for advice on how to conduct myself at events.*

*Throughout John's time at Tower Hamlets he was highly regarded by former speakers and councillors cross party. He had a friendly demeanour and remained non-partisan in his public duties.*

John is a strong believer in equipping today's youth for the future and has supported the borough's Police Cadets, Boys' Brigade, Girl Guiding, Army Cadets, Sea Scouts and the TH 31 Squadron Air Cadets, which in Dec 2016 were named the best Air Cadet Squadron in the country. John is the Vice Chairman of the Marine Society and Sea Cadets, a leading maritime charity for youth development and lifelong learning.

In 2004 John was invited by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, Councillor Abdul Aziz Sardar, on a delegation to Bangladesh which included audiences with Sheikh Hasina MP and Begum Khaleda Zia MP. The trip was an insightful and inspirational experience broadening his knowledge and understanding of the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets.

It was during this visit to Bangladesh that he learned about THESIS (Tower Hamlets Educational Support in Sylhet) Trust, an international development charity that supports women's education, healthcare, welfare and employment in Bangladesh. One of its flagship projects is its partnership work with Madan Mohan College. The project provided safe accommodation and transport to the students to enable them to complete their studies free of street violence or intimidation. The work of the charity made an impact on John who became a Trustee of THESIS shortly after his visit.

Upon reflection of his service in Tower Hamlets, John has said that Tower Hamlets is an inspirational borough reflecting all that is best in a modern urban aspirational community, being awarded the Freedom of the Borough would be an accolade beyond measure and one that he would treasure for life.

- 3.3 **Process for making the Award:** It is for the Council to determine who should be awarded the Freedom of the Borough.
- 3.4 It is proposed that the Speaker of the Council, as Chair of the Freedom of the Borough Panel, will introduce the nomination. The debate will then be opened up to any Member who wishes to speak on the proposal.
- 3.5 When Members have debated the nomination the meeting will move to the vote. The nominee needs to secure a two-third majority of those present and voting to be accepted for the Award.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Panel conducted an open nominations process. All nominations received were considered by the Panel and shortlisted based on predefined selection criteria.

## **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 None specific to this report.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 The title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman may be granted by a London borough council under section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to persons of distinction and to persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to the borough.

7.2 Under section 249(7) of the 1972 Act, the title can only be given by a resolution of full Council, at a meeting specifically convened for the purpose and the resolution must be passed by not less than two-thirds of the members who vote on it.

7.3 Under section 249(10), the admission of a person as honorary freeman or honorary freewoman does not carry any right to attend meetings of the council or its committees or to claim any allowances for attendance at meetings.

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None.

### **Appendices**

- None.

### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

- None.

### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A