



REGULATORY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Thursday 23rd November 2023

REPORT TITLE:	HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH SUE HIGGINSON, OBE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW & GOVERNANCE (MONITORING OFFICER)

REPORT SUMMARY

Under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to grant the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Borough to persons of distinction who have rendered eminent Service to the Borough.

This is a very significant step for the Council to take. Very few people have been awarded this status and, it should only be awarded to someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the Borough. Sue Higginson falls within this category.

Past recipients of this award are:

1993 Lt. Commander Ian Fraser, VC
1996 Mr. Joseph Lynch, GC, BEM (GAL)
2005 Mr. Ray Holmes
2006 The Right Reverend David Urquhart
2006 Lord Chan of Oxton
2010 Mr. Stephen Maddox, OBE
2016 PC David Phillips
2017 The Hillsborough 96
2019 Doctor Nunzia Bertali
2019 2nd Lt. Jay Frederick Simpson USAF
2022 Baron Frank Field of Birkenhead
2022 Andrew Devine
2023 Paul O'Grady
2023 Glenda Jackson

If recommended and a scroll will be presented to Sue Higginson by the Mayor.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Regulatory and General Purposes Committee is requested to recommend to Council that:

- (1) In pursuance of the provisions of Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her dedicated service to the Borough, that Sue Higginson be admitted as Honorary Freewoman of this Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held on 04th December 2023
- (2) The Head of Democratic and Member Services be requested to take all the necessary actions associated with (1) above and arrange for a small civic reception for Sue Higginson and invited guests on a mutually agreeable date following the Extraordinary Meeting of Council

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To honour Sue Higginson OBE for her eminent service to the Borough and the people of Wirral.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The alternative option is not to recommend that Sue Higginson be admitted as Honorary Freewoman of this Borough.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The origin of the Freedom of the Borough goes back to early medieval times, when with the growth of the great English towns, there emerged a class of citizen known as Freemen, who enjoyed important privileges in the government of their own and in the matter of corporate property, as against strangers and the rest of the inhabitants.
- 3.2 With the passing of the Honorary Freedom of the Boroughs Act 1885 the dignity attached to the Office of Freeman was revived and enhanced. This Act conferred upon all Municipal Corporations the power to admit as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough “persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough”. This can only be achieved by the Council voting at a specially called meeting.
- 3.3 The Freedom of the Borough is the highest award the Council can bestow.
- 3.4 Sue Higginson OBE has worked in further education for 33 years and has served as the Principal and Chief Executive at the Wirral Metropolitan College for 11 years. Over the past 10 years Sue and her team have transformed the college and seen a growth in the student roll to around 10,000. Sue is the Principal and CEO of Wirral Metropolitan College, the largest Further Education College in Wirral, leading over 500 staff and managing a turnover of approximately £23m. Sue retired from her post at the college in July 2023.
- 3.5 Sue has wide experience in the Further Education and Higher Education Sectors, as well as having previously worked in a number of private sectors, and multi-national organisations, focusing on improving quality and business efficiency through the development of people, communication and the supply chain.
- 3.6 Sue initially joined the College to develop strategic partnerships with business and industry, designing Further and Higher education programmes to develop a highly skilled, flexible workforce. Sue has led several flagship projects that have transformed the College’s approach to supporting business and industry. She was appointed Principal of Wirral Metropolitan College in 2012, having previously been a member of the College’s senior management team where she led the agendas on Quality Improvement, Partnership and Business Development.

- 3.7 Sue is also a Non-Executive Director and Vice Chair of the Association of Colleges, Vice Chair of The Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges and a keen supporter of Wirral Chamber of Commerce and Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Sue works closely with the Combined Authority and the Local Authority to support effective public sector leadership in the region, with a focus on improving business efficiency and growth by helping people aspire, develop, and achieve.
- 3.8 Sue is a qualified teacher in further and higher education and holds an MBA and several post graduate qualifications in management and leadership; she is a member of MENSA, a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM); a Chartered Manager and a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute.
- 3.9 As the Principal and CEO of the Wirral Metropolitan College, Sue Higginson was honoured with the Silver Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Pearson National Awards in June 2023. The Award for Lifetime Achievement is for those who have dedicated their life to the teaching profession and have had a significant and positive impact on the people they have worked with over the course of their teaching career, from pupils and colleagues to educational stakeholders and within their local community, and not only in their current schools, but throughout their teaching career. Their commitment to, and passion for, education is exemplary to all.
- 3.10 Sue has also supported the Mayors of Wirral Council for many years, offering the services of students and the catering facilities of Wirral Met College to host functions for Civic Dignitaries and provide catering free of charge for the Mayor's Charity tea dances.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The modest financial implications can be met from within existing budgets as detailed above.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council may by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council specifically convened for the purpose with notice of the purpose, admit Sue Higginson to be Honorary Freewoman of Wirralas in its opinion rendered eminent service to the Borough. (Section 249(5), of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no implications associated with staffing, ICT or assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 There are no known risks associated with this report.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1.1 Political Group Leaders have been consulted and support the proposals.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision, or activity. Measuring the impact of equality implications and mitigating any negative impact where possible is embedded into the core principles of good governance. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is for information purposes and as such, there are no direct environment and climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct Community Wealth Implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution Part 5, Section 19
Online source: LinkedIn
WMC.ac.uk
Teachingawardstrust.com

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee in accordance with Section 8.2 of its Terms of Reference

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Regulatory and General Purposes Committee	7 June 2023
Regulatory and General Purposes Committee	7 September 2023

