



REGULATORY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Thursday 5 September 2024

REPORT TITLE:	HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH KATHERINE PATRICIA ROUTLEDGE DAME OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE (DBE)
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW & CORPORATE SERVICES (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. The Freedom of the Borough should only be awarded to someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the Borough. Katherine Patricia Routledge DBE, (Patricia Routledge) of Tranmere, Birkenhead is considered to be 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, MBE DL
2023 Sue Higginson, OBE
2023 Glenda Jackson, MBE
2024 David Armstrong

If recommended to Council and subsequently approved a scroll will be presented to Patricia Routledge 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 Patricia Routledge be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held on 7 October 2024.
- (2) The Head of Democratic and Members Services be requested to take all the necessary actions associated with recommendation (1) above and arrange for a small civic reception for Patricia Routledge and some 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 Patricia Routledge of Tranmere, Birkenhead for her eminent service to the Borough and the people of Wirral.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The alternative option is for the Committee not to recommend that Patricia Routledge be admitted as an 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/Freewoman was revived and enhanced. This Act conferred upon all Municipal Corporations the power to admit as Honorary Freeman/Freewoman 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 Patricia Routledge was born on 17 February 1929 in Tranmere, Birkenhead. Her father was a haberdasher and gentleman’s outfitter named Isaac Routledge and her mother was Catherine Routledge. She had two brothers called Kenneth Graham Routledge and Edgar H Routledge who died in infancy.
- 3.5 Patricia attended Mersey Park Primary School, and subsequently Birkenhead High School where she sang in the choir and ran the Sunday School. She later went on to study at Liverpool University where she graduated with honours in English Language and Literature. Patricia subsequently attended the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and London’s Guildhall School of Music.
- 3.6 Patricia made her professional debut at the Liverpool Playhouse in 1952 in “A Midsummer Nights Dream”. Her first television appearance was in 1956 in the ITV play of the week and her first film appearance was in 1967 in “To Sir with Love”.
- 3.7 Patricia’s best-known role was playing Hyacinth Bucket in the comedy series “Keeping Up Appearances” that aired from 1990 – 1995 and in respect of which she won a British Comedy Award.
- 3.8 Throughout her career she has appeared in 9 films, 66 television shows and 56 stage shows. Her last TV appearance was in 2023 in “Keeping Up Appearances – 30 years of laughs”.

- 3.9 In an incredible career spanning more than 70 years, Patricia has also been awarded a Tony Award and an Olivier Award. She has also received an OBE, a CBE and a DBE for services to theatre and charity.
- 3.10 In 2008, Patricia received an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Lancaster University for her contribution to drama and theatre. In 2019 she received a similar award from the University of Chester for her contributions to theatre and television.
- 3.11 The Patricia Routledge Charitable Trust provides charity to help health care, schools, historical heritage, the English language, theatre world, young talents. Patricia is also associated with the Royal Voluntary Service that is best known for its meals on wheels service. Patricia has been a longstanding supporter of Age UK Wirral and is the Patron of their Meadowcroft Appeal.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

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 Patricia Routledge to be an Honorary Freewoman of the place or area for which it is the authority being a person of distinction and a person who have in its opinion rendered eminent services 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 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 There are no direct environment and climate implications arising from the proposals within this report.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from the proposals within this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nomination Form
Wirral Council Constitution Part 5, Section 19
Online sources
Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act 1885
Local Government Act 1972

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
Regulatory and General Purposes Committee	23 November 2023
Regulatory and General Purposes Committee	13 June 2024