



## **REGULATORY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Thursday 5 September 2024**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH YMCA WIRRAL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF LAW &amp; CORPORATE SERVICES (MONITORING OFFICER)</b>

### **REPORT SUMMARY**

Under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to grant the title of Honorary Freedom of the Borough to persons and on this occasion an organisation of distinction that has 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 where an exceptional contribution has been made to the Borough. YMCA Wirral 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 representatives of the YMCA Wirral 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 the organisations dedicated service to the Borough, that YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) Wirral be awarded the Honorary Freedom of the Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held on 7 October 2024.
- (2) The Head of Democratic and Member Services be requested to take all the necessary actions associated with recommendation (1) above and arrange for a small civic reception for representatives of YMCA Wirral 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 YMCA Wirral for their 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 YMCA Wirral be awarded the Honorary Freedom 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 Honorary Freeman of the Borough persons or organisations of distinction and any persons or organisations who have rendered eminent services to the Borough". The term "persons" was extended to include organisations under the Interpretation Act 1978. This power 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 YMCA Wirral supports some of the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society, not just in Birkenhead but across the whole of the borough. The people supported by the charity include people who are street homeless, people who are impacted by domestic abuse, the criminal justice system, long term unemployment, addictions and substance abuse. The YMCA provides tailored person-centred support in reconnecting these individuals with mainstream society and empowering them to lead independent lives.
- 3.5 YMCA Wirral provides accommodation, training and homes to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, as well as the support, information, advice, and employability training they need. George Williams formed the first YMCA, in London in 1844. Since then the YMCA has grown to have over 148 Local Associations of which Wirral is one of them. The central purpose of all YMCAs is to meet the needs of young people particularly in times of need and regardless of their gender race, ability or faith. From its humble beginnings it has grown to be a cornerstone of the local community, providing a total of 86 bedspaces, and offering up to 20 overnight emergency sit-up places during extreme weather. In 2023, the charity supported 689 individuals.
- 3.6 YMCA Wirral is widely regarded for the work that it does by commissioning authorities, the local authority, Merseyside Police, Police and Crime Commissioners Office and local communities. Those who are homeless or facing street

homelessness are one of the most important client groups supported by YMCA Wirral.

- 3.7 The multi-disciplinary teams at YMCA Wirral support a wide range of people from newly homeless or at risk of homelessness to those experiencing rough sleeping and leading a street-based lifestyle. Many have suffered scarring childhood trauma and mental health issues which have put them on a challenging path. The in-house support staff team provide 24-hour wrap-around services to everyone aged 18 years and upwards.
- 3.8 On the nights of the year, where the weather is at its worst, YMCA Wirral opens its doors to anyone in need of a warm place to stay and feel safe and secure. In 2023 that meant YMCA assisting 97 local people. In addition, at Christmas time YMCA provided four days of temporary accommodation, food and gifts to those who have nowhere and no-one to share with.
- 3.9 YMCA Wirral works with probation teams and the local authority to provide short and long-term supported accommodation options for people leaving prison to provide a positive new start, re-engage with society, rehabilitate and break the cycle of offending. They also work with local agencies to support individuals discharged from hospital without suitable accommodation to recuperate.
- 3.10 YMCA Wirral showed their incredible service during the Covid-19 pandemic, providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to front line staff, supporting people through the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions, upgrading living spaces in communal areas and providing an enhanced set of activities for residents to prevent boredom, isolation and to enhance emotional wellbeing.
- 3.11 During the year 2023, staff and residents donated 660+ hours to local causes.

#### **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 YMCA Wirral to be awarded Honorary Freedom of the place or area for which it is the authority persons, including organisations of distinction and persons, including organisations 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  
Interpretation Act 1978

## **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)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
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**Regulatory and General Purposes Committee**  
**Regulatory and General Purposes Committee**  
**Regulatory and General Purposes Committee**  
**Regulatory and General Purposes Committee**

**7 June 2023**  
**7 September 2023**  
**23 November 2023**  
**13 June 2024**