

Item No. 2.1	Classification: Open	Date: 6 April 2011	Meeting Name: Extraordinary Meeting of Council Assembly
Report title:		Freedom of The Borough	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Constitutional Steering Panel	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Assembly considers the recommendation from the Constitutional Steering Panel to confer the award of Freedom of the Borough to F. A. Albin & Sons.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The council has power under Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer the title of "Freeman of the Borough" on persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the borough. For the purposes of the Act 'person' includes organisations. The constitution (3A.21) provides for council assembly to confer the title of Freedom of the Borough.
3. The council must agree such conferment by resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present at a meeting specially convened for that purpose with notice of the purpose being set out in the summons for the meeting.
4. The council has power under Section 249(6) to spend a reasonable sum as thought fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to such Honorary Freeman.
5. The Honorary Freedom of the Borough is the highest award the council can bestow. Since 1965 Southwark has conferred the award on 31 recipients. On each occasion the council has considered nominations on individual merit. The last awards were conferred in 2003.
6. Council Assembly agreed on 30 October 2002 the following criteria for conferment of the Freedom of the Borough.
 - That nominations may be received from councillors, officers, MPs, outside organisations and members of the public who are on the council's Electoral Register.
 - That nominations be limited to one per person/organisation and be submitted via the Borough Solicitor's Office [*sic*] – nominations must show by example that the nominee is a "person of distinction who has rendered eminent services to the borough".
 - That there be no restriction as to how often this award may be conferred.
7. Nominations are initially considered by the Constitutional Steering Panel (CSP) which then makes recommendations to Council Assembly. CSP considered the nomination on 14 March 2011. If Council Assembly agrees to confer the honour, then a ceremony for

presentation of the Honorary Freedom of the Borough is arranged. Previously this has been at a special meeting of the council but it may be more appropriate, if timing allows, to make it coincident with the Civic Awards and conferment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen scheduled for 7 May 2011 at St Georges Cathedral.

8. A framed Certificate and Honorary Freedom Badge on ribbon (individuals) or Commemorative Plaque (organisations) is presented to honorands.
9. The office of Honorary Freedom of the Borough does not convey with it any legal rights or responsibilities other than a ceremonial role at civic functions. Conditions apply to an award conferred on an organisation (Appendix A).
10. A formal nomination has been received from Councillor Jeff Hook following debate on the motion 'Southwark tribute to heroes' and the associated deputation at Council Assembly on 26 January 2011.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

F. A. Albin & Sons

11. F.A. Albin & Sons, a family business based in Bermondsey, have been Funeral Directors for over 200 years and supported many Southwark families through bereavement. They also manage the repatriation of all British service personnel who are killed in Afghanistan and Iraq and consequently all returning casualties are brought back through Southwark.
12. Albin's have been actively engaged in supporting fallen heroes through their long and strong association with the charity *Help for heroes* and more recently *Homes for heroes*.
13. Barry Albin-Dyer has been an independent member of Southwark's Standards Committee and has been an active member of the Southwark Civic Association for several years.
14. The following is quoted from an Early Day Motion this year:

That this House congratulates Barry Albin-Dyer OBE of Bermondsey on reaching his 60th birthday; pays tribute to him for his lifetime of service in countless ways to individuals, families and organisations in his own community, more widely across south-east London and in recent years increasingly in other parts of Britain and abroad; congratulates him and his family on the work done by the family firm F.A. Albin Sons since its foundation over 200 years ago; gives special recognition to the difficult and nationally important work done by Barry Albin-Dyer and his firm in supporting families of those killed in action in Her Majesty's armed forces and bringing home with dignity and honour the bodies of the fallen, first to Bermondsey and then to their homes throughout the world;
15. Every time there is a death in Afghanistan, a representative from the company flies to Camp Bastion where, with military staff, they ensure the body is cared for and a full report of the injuries is made for the coroner. While staff in Afghanistan attend the ramp ceremony, the poignant service in which the soldiers pay their last respects, other colleagues prepare for their return at RAF Lyneham where Mr Albin-Dyer sits with the families in the chapel, explaining funeral procedures. Albin International Repatriations has been bringing home soldiers and their families killed abroad for 12 years, developing bereavement procedures and training up military padres and morticians.

Community impact statement

16. This proposal has little direct impact but should be seen as promoting the wider civic role of the authority as well as formal recognition of the contribution of the nominee for eminent service to Southwark.

Resource implications

17. Occasional Honorary Freedom of the Borough ceremonies can be managed within existing staff and financial resources and where possible are linked to the annual Civic Awards.
18. The cost of framed scroll and badge/plaque is currently about £300.

Legal implications

19. Legal issues are outlined in the body of the report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark constitution	On line	

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Honorary Freedom awards to organisations - conditions

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	
Report Author	Graham Love, Head of Democratic Services	
Version	Final	
Dated	15 March 2011	
Key decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer title	Comments sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		24 March 2011

APPENDIX A

Honorary Freedom awards to organisations - conditions

- A. The award does not provide any rights or privileges to the recipient.
- B. The award is not of itself an endorsement of any services or goods provided by the organisation.
- C. The granting of the award does not entitle the recipient to use the official crest of the council.
- D. Use of or reference to the award in any advertising or promotional activity is subject to the prior approval of the council. The council reserves the right to withdraw the award in the event of unauthorised use or reference to the award.
- E. When an award is granted to an organisation it may not be used in any way to suggest that the individuals associated with the organisation are themselves in receipt of the award.
- F. Where an organisation ceases to exist or ceases to operate in the activity recognised by the award it is automatically withdrawn. The award is not transferrable.
- G. The award does not signal that the council will act as a referee for the organisation.
- H. All recipients, including organisations, are expected to uphold the principles of the civic functions of the authority and to encompass the diversity of our communities.