

Item No. 6.2	Classification: Open	Date: 29th October 2003	Meeting Name: Council Assembly
Report title:		Freedom of the Borough	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Standards Committee	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Assembly considers the award of Freedom of the Borough to Sir Philip Charles Harris, Lord Harris of Peckham.

BACKGROUND

2. The terms of reference of the Standards Committee include making recommendations to Council Assembly for the award of the Honorary Freedom of the Borough. Standards Committee at its meeting on the 13th October, 2003 considered and agreed to recommend to Council Assembly the award of Freedom of the Borough to Sir Philip Charles Harris, Lord Harris of Peckham.
3. 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.
4. Such conferment must be agreed by the Council 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.
5. 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.
6. The Honorary Freedom of the Borough is the highest Award the Council can bestow. Since 1965 Southwark have conferred the award on 27 recipients including the four most recent on 4th September 2002. They were Sister Hoskison, Frau Kruckeberg, Rio Ferdinand and Lord James Callaghan. The previous recipient to this was Sir Montague Levine in April 1997. On each occasion the Council has considered the nomination on its individual merit. On the 17th September 2003 Council Assembly agreed to award the Freedom of the Borough to Jack Jones OBE, the ceremony for which has yet to be arranged.
7. Council Assembly agreed on the 30th October 2002 the following criteria for conferment of the Freedom of the Borough.
8. That nominations may be received from Councillors, Officers, MPs, outside organisations and members of the public who are on the Council's Electoral Register.
9. That nominations be limited to one per person/organisation and be submitted to the Standards Committee via the Borough Solicitor's Office – nominations must show by

example that the nominee is a “person of distinction who has rendered eminent services to the Borough”;

10. That Serving Councillors be ineligible for this award other than in exceptional circumstances;
11. That Organisations be ineligible to receive the Honorary Freedom of the Borough; and
12. That there be no restriction as to how often this award may be conferred.
13. Nominations are initially considered by Standards Committee, which then makes recommendations to Council Assembly. If Council Assembly agree to confer the honour, then a Ceremony for presentation of the Honorary Freedom of the Borough is arranged at a Special Meeting of the Council which is currently held in the Council Chamber in the Town Hall.
14. A framed Certificate and Honorary Freedom Badge on ribbon is presented to Honorands.
15. 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.

KEY FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

16. A nomination for Lord Harris of Peckham to be awarded the Freedom of the Borough in recognition of his care and commitment shown to the people of Southwark has been received from Councillor Kim Humphries. The following information is in support of the nomination.

LORD HARRIS OF PECKHAM

17. Philip Charles Harris was born in Blakes Road, Peckham on the 15th September 1942, the son of Charles and Ruth Harris. Charles Harris, a war hero, began selling lino from a stall in Peckham Market. Philip was educated at Streatham Grammar School and in 1957 at the age of 15 he left school to take over the running of the family business, which consisted of three carpet shops, after his father's premature death. By 1977 the shops had increased to 93. Later that year he acquired Queensway Discount Warehouse and in 1978 successfully floated the Harris Queensway Group. This was taken over in 1988 and Lord Harris went on to set up Carpetright, which was floated in 1993. Lord Harris is Chairman and Chief Executive of Carpetright PLC which now has over 440 stores.
18. Philip Harris was knighted in 1985 and raised to the Peerage of Baron Harris of Peckham, of Peckham in the London Borough of Southwark in 1996.
19. Lord Harris married Pauline Chumley in 1960 and they have three sons, Charles, Peter and Martin and a daughter Susan. Lord and Lady Harris set up the Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust in 1981 which specifically donates to Medical Research (Guy's and Birthright/Wellbeing Centres) and Education. Lord Harris is dyslexic, as are his three sons, and this is one of the reasons why he sponsored the Harris City Technology College in Croydon and is also a sponsor of the Bacon CTC in Rotherhithe, Southwark.

20. Lord Harris has demonstrated his commitment to the education of young people from inner city areas over many years most recently acting as sponsor for the newly opened City Academy in Peckham, formerly Warwick Park School.
21. A youth centre in Peckham, which was rededicated in memory of Damilola Taylor, was funded in part by a donation from Lord Harris. The estate on which Damilola was unfortunately killed was the one on which Lord Harris grew up.
22. The effort and commitment given by Lord Harris to the people of Southwark has shown that he is a worthy recipient of the Freedom of the Borough.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

23. Occasional Honorary Freedom of the Borough Ceremonies could be managed within existing staff and financial resources.
24. If the Council were to increase the frequency of these awards further staff resources may become necessary.
25. The cost of framed scroll and badge is currently £275 per recipient.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Deborah Holmes, Borough Solicitor & Secretary	
Report Author	Gillian Allwright, Member Services Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	3 rd October 2003	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	Yes	Yes
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
<i>List other Officers here</i>		
Executive Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	6 th October 2003	