

10 December 2008

Dear Councillor

I hereby summon you to attend a SPECIAL MEETING of the Council to be held on **Thursday 18 December 2008** at 7.30pm, in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre, Addlestone.

I am, Sir/Madam,
Your obedient servant

T N Williams
Chief Executive Officer

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – SECTION 249(5)
FREEDOM OF ENTRY TO THE BOROUGH OF RUNNYMEDE

Introduction

This special meeting has been convened in the centenary year of the Chertsey unit now part of the Territorial Army as 886 Troop, part of 94 (Berkshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron of 39 Signal Regiment.

As a mark of the long association of the unit with the town of Chertsey, and in appreciation of the services rendered to the country by its members in hazardous deployments throughout the world, senior Members have indicated a wish that the Council consider granting the honour of Freedom of Entry to the Borough.

Background to Freedom of Entry

Officers are indebted to the Borough of Charnwood, which conferred a similar honour on the Royal Anglian Regiment, for the following summary. The practice of granting 'Freedom of Entry' to military units has its roots deep in the history of local government; it is an interesting example of the power of boroughs of the past. During the Middle Ages, formed bodies of troops were not allowed to march through a town without seeking the permission of the Council. As most towns were surrounded by a fortified wall the leading citizens were in a position to refuse access if, for some reason, they were suspicious of the Commander's intentions. Freedom of entry would normally be granted to locally

based troops once mutual confidence and friendship had been established and when the citizens were satisfied that the troops would protect their interests.

Permission to enter traditionally confers upon units the right "to march through the city with due ceremonial, drums beating, bands playing and banner flying", in recognition of the confidence, trust and friendship existing between the citizens and soldiers. Such permission can be evidenced by a sealed and illuminated certificate, which may be presented at a formal parade where the Mayor inspects the assembled troops.

Power to grant Freedom of Entry

Although certain authorities, in particular Borough Councils, have the power to admit as honorary Freemen "persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the borough", there is no mention of Freedom of Entry. However section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives local authorities the power to do anything which they consider will promote or improve the economic, social, or environmental well-being of their area whether for all residents or only some. The Council may well consider that the social well-being of its area is enhanced by the recognition of a body which has had a long and honorable association with the area and has served the country as a whole. Indeed many authorities have considered it right to grant such honours with or without the authority of section 2.

It is considered appropriate that the procedure for approving the grant mirror that for admitting an individual as Freeman, namely a special meeting of the Council and approval of the proposal by two thirds of the Members voting.

Ceremonial

Should the Council approve the proposal at this meeting, a date will be arranged for a ceremony to mark the conferring of Freedom of Entry and provide the opportunity for an appropriate parade by the unit.

Further information

Officers hope to have the opportunity before the meeting to circulate a note with information about the history of the unit, and the wording of an appropriate motion.