

Committee: Audit & Standards Committee

Date: Thursday, 28
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Title: Freedom of the District

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Summary

1. This report is to inform members of the ability of the Council to grant Freedom of the District (technically 'freedom of entry to the district in certain circumstances') to the Armed Forces based at Carver Barracks. Following the grant of the 'Freedom of the District' to 33 Engineer Regiment in 2009 the report recommends that the Freedom be extended to 35 Engineer Regiment (E O D) which is also stationed at Carver Barracks, thus granting parity of esteem to the two Regiments.

Recommendations

2. To recommend to full council:
 - I. That members grant the 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD) freedom to enter the district of Uttlesford with the right to march through the streets with due ceremony, bayonets fixed, colours flying and bands playing in appreciation of the services rendered to the country by its members in hazardous deployments throughout the world.
 - II. That the Council presents the regiment with a framed scroll to mark the grant of freedom of entry.
 - III. That the freedom of entry be formally presented to the Regiment by the Chairman of the Council at the Council meeting at which it is agreed.
 - IV. That discussions begin with the Regiment to first exercise their new Freedom by planning a march.

Background Papers

3. Paragraph 6 is a summary of information supplied by Charnwood Borough Council whose assistance in this respect is gratefully acknowledged. Further background information was presented to Council on 21 April 2009.

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	None.
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Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Finance	CEO has committed to an annual budget of £5k to cover reasonable costs of any such march, such as road closures, stewarding etc.
Legal/human rights Implications	<p>Section 249(5) Local Government Act 1972 includes a power for some councils to admit honorary freemen. The power is only exercisable by a London borough, a district which has the status of a city, borough or royal borough or a parish or community having the status of a city or a royal town.</p> <p>Thus, district councils are not empowered to admit freemen under this provision.</p> <p>However, the general power of wellbeing contained in section 2 Local Government Act 2000 is considered wide enough to permit the grant of freedom of entry as it would enhance the relationship between the regiment and the district thus promoting the social wellbeing of the district and ongoing commitment to our Armed Forces Community.</p>
Sustainability	None.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	Budget to support the commissioning of an event organiser to work alongside all other partners involved.

Situation

5. As a mark of the long association of the 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD) with the district of Uttlesford senior members of the Regiment have informally indicated their willingness to accept should the Council offer to grant them the honour of freedom of entry to the district.
6. The practice of granting freedom of entry to military units has its roots in the history of local government. It is indicative of the power of boroughs in the past. During the Middle Ages 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 able to refuse access if they wished. Freedom of entry would normally be granted to locally based troops once mutual confidence and friendship had been established.

7. Freedom of entry traditionally confers upon the unit the right to march through the area with due ceremony, bayonets fixed, colours flying and bands playing.
8. The Freedom of the District to 33 Regiment was set out on a handwritten illuminated scroll which hangs in the atrium outside the Council Chamber. A similar scroll will be presented to 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD).

- 11 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD&S) is currently focused on its support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) through delivering counter-explosive ordnance training in Eastern Europe, as well as further training to AFU in the UK. The Regiment also holds a major NATO readiness commitment through 17 Field Squadron, which reflects the Ministry of Defence's priority for the UK to take a leading role in NATO. 21 Field Squadron recently deployed to Kenya to conduct a range sweep, which is a valuable opportunity for our field squadrons to practice their Search and Explosive Ordnance Disposal capabilities.

On a separate note, sport plays a key role in the moral and physical components of the British Army. 15 Headquarters & Support Squadron is leading with the Sapper Games 2025 (1-3 Jul 2025), a major festival of sport and soldiering designed to boost 'esprit de corps', which will see c. 2,000 soldiers from the Corps of Royal Engineers come to Carver Barracks, Wimbish.

Risk Analysis

12. There are no risks associated with this report.