

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 11 April 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Proposal to Grant Freeman and Freewomen Status to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution
Purpose of Report:	To consider granting the members of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Vale of Glamorgan), a registered charity in the Vale of Glamorgan, the title of honorary freemen and honorary freewomen in recognition of their distinguished service to residents and visitors of the Vale of Glamorgan in the RNLI's 200th anniversary year. The freedom ceremony to be held on Saturday 1 st June, 2024 on Barry Island.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas, Chief Executive
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	As this report is not ward specific, no ward Member consultation has been undertaken
Policy Framework:	A resolution to grant Freeman and Freewomen status of the County Borough is a decision for Full Council to take and requires a two thirds majority.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 and specifically under s.249(5) a Principal Council may admit to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of the place or area for which it is the Authority (a) persons of distinction, and (b) persons who have, in the opinion of the Authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area. • The overriding principle is that these awards should be made on merit, such as achievement or exceptional service, and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) as a registered charity may, subject to a resolution of Full Council be granted the title of honorary freemen or honorary freewomen subject to it being satisfied that the criteria it would apply exists in their case such that they are considered to be (a) persons of distinction, and (b) persons who have, in the opinion of the Authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area. • The RNLI has existed as a Registered Charity for 200 years having recently celebrated this anniversary after being founded in 1824. • The RNLI are already planning (supported by the Council) a Festival of the Sea at Barry Island this June, to celebrate the 200 year anniversary. The event is scheduled across two days and is designed to celebrate and showcase the various activities of the RNLI. This provides an opportunity to celebrate and commemorate the contribution made by the RNLI and the volunteers to life in the Vale 	

of Glamorgan.

Recommendations

- 1.** That Cabinet recommends to Full Council that pursuant to their powers under Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council confer upon the members of the RNLI in the Vale of Glamorgan the title of Honorary Freemen and Freewomen of the County Borough in recognition of the distinguished service history within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.** That the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to ensure this honour is commemorated during the planned Festival of the Sea event scheduled to take place at Barry Island on 1st and 2nd June, 2024.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.** To consider the granting of Freemen and Freewomen status to members of the RNLI in the Vale of Glamorgan in pursuance of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 2.** To allow arrangements to be made to commemorate the proposed Freemen and Freewomen status.

1. Background

- 1.1** The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) was founded in 1824 and has recently marked its 200 year anniversary. The charity saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates 238 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and more than 240 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824, its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,700 lives.
- 1.2** In the Vale of Glamorgan, Penarth Lifeboat Station was originally opened in 1861 before being closed in 1905 and services transferred to other stations. The station reopened in 1980 in its new building on the Esplanade.
- 1.3** Barry Dock Lifeboat Station was established in 1901 and has operated from the Docks in Barry ever since.
- 1.4** Atlantic College Lifeboat Station opened in 1963 and operated until the lifeboat was withdrawn in 2013, although in the mid-2010s a program of small Rigid Hulled Inflatable Boat powerboat building and operator training was introduced for students.
- 1.5** The work of the RNLI in the Vale of Glamorgan and beyond demonstrates the power, significance and impact of volunteering in its widest sense to the wider community and nowhere is this more critical than when it comes to saving lives on the Vale of Glamorgan coast.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** At the Council meeting on 6th March, 2024 the Leader of the Council under the agenda item Announcements advised the Members of the Council of her intention to bring a report to the next meeting of the Council in April 2024 requesting support to grant the title of honorary freemen and honorary freewomen to the members of the Vale of Glamorgan area RNLI. The proposal to confer upon the RNLI the title of Honorary Freemen and Freewomen of the County Borough in recognition of the distinguished service history within the Vale of Glamorgan is a decision for Full Council.
- 2.2** Freedom of entry in instances such as these are granted under section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 and requires a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council.
- 2.3** If the Council resolves to confer the honour, a ceremony will be held at a location set by the Council, with the presentation of a scroll or plaque. The recipients of the Freedom would normally reply by making a presentation to the Council. The Festival of the Sea event at Barry Island on 1st and 2nd of June allows the intention, if agreed by Full Council to be celebrated given that this event is being planned by and will involve the RNLI. It is an ideal opportunity to promote the work of the charity, to show appreciation and to promote the benefits and importance of volunteering in a wider context.
- 2.4** The RNLI have advised of their willingness to accept the honour if approved by the Council.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Recognising the service provided by a wide range of volunteers who support the RNLI and have supported the charity during its 200 year history is consistent with the manner in which the Council seeks to embrace the Five Ways of Working. Commemorating the work of volunteers links to the theme of 'Collaborating with others' and recognises the role played by different organisations and the impact of those roles, particularly given that the Vale of Glamorgan is a coastal Authority.
- 3.2** In addition, the work of the RNLI and the volunteers who provide their time in supporting the work of the RNLI links into the 'Prevention' agenda as well as the desire to promote 'Involvement' through volunteering.
- 3.3** Commemorating the work over the previous 200 years and celebrating that work allows the Council and the RNLI to look forward 'to the long term'.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no direct climate change and nature implications arising out of the report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The report and proposals have minimal financial implications given that the Freedom itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour, reflecting the eminence of the person on whom it is conferred or as recognition of significant and valuable services rendered to the city or borough by that person or organisation.
- 5.2** Commemorating the honour at the Festival of the Sea event is an effective way of demonstrating the Council's support to the RNLI and the gratitude to all those volunteers who give their time to support others.
- 5.3** The cost of organising the ceremony will be met from the Civic Ceremonies budget.

Employment

- 5.4** There are no employment implications arising out of the report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.5** The legal powers to confer Freemen and Freewomen status is as set out in Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

6. Background Papers

None applicable.