

Report of:	Managing Director
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Key Decision:	No
Report Track:	Council: 30/08/17

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
30 AUGUST 2017
GRANTING THE FREEDOM OF ENTRY TO THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To approve the granting of the honour of Freedom of Entry to Cannock Chase District to the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch) to mark the centenary of the RAF in April 2018.
- 1.2 To approve the use of an existing budget to host a celebratory event to mark the occasion.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council agree that the Freedom of Entry to Cannock Chase District on ceremonial occasions be granted to the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch), and that the award be presented in scroll form as follows...

“To the...

We the Chairman and Councillors of the District of Cannock Chase in the County of Staffordshire, in pursuance of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, being desirous of recognising the association between the Royal Air Force Association and the District and wishing to foster and enhance the close ties and relations with the District, do by these presents confer upon the Royal Air Force and the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch), the Freedom of Entry into the District on ceremonial occasions.

The Common Seal of the Council of the District of Cannock Chase was hereunto Affixed the day of two thousand and eighteen.

- 2.2 That the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to the Freedom Scroll.
- 2.3 That Council approve the nature of the celebratory event for honouring the Freedom of the District to the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch) (based on the details outlined in Section 5 of the report).

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The granting of the honour of Freedom of Entry and the celebratory event will be delivered using an existing budget, therefore a supplementary budget is not required.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The granting of the honour of Freedom of Entry to the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch) reflects the Council's community leadership role as set out in the Corporate Plan 2015-18.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 "a principal Council may, by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, confer the title of" honorary Freedom of Entry on current serving uniformed organisations (usually, but not exclusively, the military) which have rendered conspicuous service and which are associated with the District.
- 5.2 Freedom of Entry traditionally grants military organisations the freedom to march through the streets of the District with Colours flying, drums beating and bayonets fixed. This does not carry any rights or responsibilities but is the most honourable distinction that a District Council can bestow.
- 5.3 Council, at its meeting on 5 April 2017 resolved "That the process for conferring the honour of Freedom of Entry to Cannock Chase District to the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase branch) to mark the centenary of the Royal Air Force in April, 2018, be commenced; the detail of which will be contained within a report to be submitted to Council in due course." The Freedom of Entry would cover both serving members of the Royal Air Force and Royal Air Force veterans and members of the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch) which have a long history of service to our country and our local communities. A detailed history of the Royal Air Force within Cannock Chase can be seen in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 The Royal Air Force celebrates its centenary on 1st April 2018. The RAF100 programme will salute its centenary and:
- **COMMERATE** its achievements and all those that have served;
 - **CELEBRATE** the RAF of today;
 - **INSPIRE** its people, and the wider public, about its future.

Details of the RAF100 can be found in Appendix 2.

- 5.5 To mark the granting of this honour a formal civic event, hosted by the Chairman of the Council is anticipated to take place on Friday 11th May 2018 (date subject to confirmation) in Hednesford between 10.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. which will honour the Royal Air Force Association (Cannock Chase Branch) with the Freedom of the District.
- 5.6 A church service will take place followed by a military parade through the town centre into Hednesford Park. This will include Royal Air Force personnel (serving and veterans) and the local Air Cadets.
- 5.7 A formal honorary ceremony to grant the Freedom of the District will take place in Hednesford Park, followed by afternoon tea and light entertainment.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The approximate cost to organise a celebratory event for the granting of the Freedom of the District is as follows:

Official acknowledgments	
Freedom scroll	£1,500 - £2,000
Inscription cost on Freedom board	£150 - £200
Celebratory Event	
Church Service	£0
Parade:	
First Aid	£250
Road Closure	£120
Formal ceremony (refreshments, entertainment, marquee etc.)	Refreshments: £3,960 (based on £9.90 per head) Entertainment: Lea Hall Brass Band - £250 - £300 Marquee: £3,500 - £4,000 (will hold approximately 400 people)
Publicity	£500
Estimated maximum budget required:	£11,500

Provision exists within the Civic Duties and Hospitality Earmarked Reserve for this expenditure.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None

6.5 Human Rights Act

None

6.6 Data Protection

None

6.7 Risk Management

The main risks identified in relation to this event are:

- those associated with organising a large scale event in the Park which is a public open space, i.e. health and safety, inclement weather etc.;
- that a military parade may be the target for adverse actions/attacks.

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None.

6.9 Best Value

None.

7 Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1: History of the Royal Air Force in Cannock Chase.

Appendix 2: RAF 100

Previous Consideration

None

Background Papers

None

History of the Royal Air Force in Cannock Chase

- **Cannock's close encounter with the RAF**

Between 1938 and 1956 many thousands of RAF, and initially Fleet Air Arm, recruits and staff were significant members of the local population following the building of RAF Hednesford - designated No 6 School of Technical Training.

The plan was for 4,000 recruits and 800 instructors to undertake 10-month flight mechanic and flight rigger training courses.

LMS built a railway halt at Moors Gorse on the line between Hednesford and Rugeley and the Ministry of Defence bought a 10-acre site at Pye Green to build council housing for civilian instructors and their families.

Following the end of the war, Hednesford became No 11 School of Recruit Training and switched to teaching National Servicemen the basics of square-bashing, discipline and handling weaponry.

In 1956 the buildings found a new use as housing for Hungarians fleeing the uprising in their homeland,

- **Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)**

With over 63,000 members and 500 branches in UK locations from the Shetlands to the south coast, and worldwide from Scandinavia to Japan and Australia, RAFA offers a wealth of opportunities for community-minded people through welfare and fundraising work, plus a programme of trips and social events.

Administrative overheads are met from membership fees. Wings Appeal receipts and donations are ring-fenced for welfare work.

Formed initially in 1930s as the Comrades of the Royal Air Forces Association the current title was adopted in 1943.

- **Cannock Chase Branch of RAFA**

Cannock Chase (573) Royal Air Forces Association was formed on August 12th 1946. The inaugural meeting was held on September 11th in the offices of the District Council's education department.

The following branch officers were elected: chairman, Mr R F Glaze; vice-chairman, Sqn Ldr McLeod; secretary, Mr W F Jeynes; treasurer, Mr F A Folkes; welfare officer, Mr G Harley.

Subsequent monthly meetings were held at the Black Horse Hotel (now Silks Nightclub) until 1951. Other meeting venues were the White Hart (1952-3); Central Hotel ((1954-63); Cannock British Legion Club (1964-5); Hednesford Ex-Servicemen's Club (1966-75); Cannock Unionist Club (1976-78); Cannock Ex-Servicemen's Club (1979-present).

The major reason for formation of the branch was, in the immediate aftermath of WW2, to provide help, support and friendship to the RAF family in times of need – including former and serving personnel, their dependants, widows and widowers.

The annual charity Wings Appeal is well supported by the public in Cannock Chase, providing the means for the volunteer branch welfare officer to continue vital home and hospital visits and assessments for longer term support in the community.

Membership is open to anyone aged 18+. There is no military service requirement.

RAF 100

April 1st 2018 marks the centenary of the formation of the RAF as the worlds' first military air formation independent of the army control.

It was an amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps (part of the Air Battalion Royal Engineers) and the Royal Naval Air Service.

The roll-call included pilots from 14 non-UK nations. It was the most powerful Air Force in the world, with 20,000 aircraft and 300,000 personnel.

The most symbolic RAF conflict of WW2 was the Battle of Britain, in which the average age of a spitfire pilot was 19 and the life expectancy 28 days. The pilots were from 14 nations. Poland 145, New Zealand 135, Canada 1122, Czechoslovakia 88, Australia 32, South Africa 25, France 14, Republic of Ireland 10, United States 11, Rhodesia 5, Jamaica, Barbados and Newfoundland 1 each.

In Bomber command the average crew age was 20 and the average life expectancy a mere seven days.

By the end of the war there were, for instance, 19,400 Polish nationals in the RAF. Those who remained in the UK after victory were usually directed in to heavy industries like steelmaking (West Midlands) and coal mining (Cannock).