



**REPORT OF: Council Leader, Councillor Mohammed Khan**

**TO: COUNCIL FORUM**

**ON: 1 OCTOBER 2015**

**SUBJECT:** Appointment of an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

## **1. PURPOSE:**

### **To Consider:**

The award of an Honorary Freeman of the Borough to the town's former Member of Parliament, The Right Honourable Jack Straw.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council is recommended to:

- (i) Agree to grant an Honorary Freeman award to The Right Honourable Jack Straw for his outstanding services in accordance with section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 .
- (ii) Subject to (i) above, request the Chief Executive to organize appropriate arrangements for a formal ceremony later in the year.

## **3. BACKGROUND/RATIONALE**

The Freedom of the Borough recognizes eminent services of local people to their borough. The award dates back to the middle ages when Freeman had commercial privileges and a route into a position of power in a town or city.

Section 249[5] of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that a Council may admit '*persons of distinction and persons who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to that place or area*'.

The award of Freedom of the Borough does not convey any legal rights or responsibilities.

Honorary Freeman are often invited to take part in important ceremonial occasions in the borough.

The Right Honourable Jack Straw was the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Blackburn for more than 36 years, between 1979 and 2015, making him the longest serving MP in the town's history. During this parliamentary office he held a number of high profile positions, including Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Lord Chancellor and Leader of the House of Commons. His pivotal role in the passing of the Human Rights Act 1998 has also been recognised.

He continually promoted the interests of those who live and work in Blackburn, delivering extraordinary opportunities for the area. All sectors benefitted from his work to support major investment schemes resulting in the borough securing billions of pounds of investment in businesses, public facilities infrastructure and brand new schools.

During his seat as Member of Parliament he split his time between London and his constituency. He became a familiar sight in the town centre during his many 'soap box' sessions as well as holding regular residents' surgeries, earning a reputation as an exceptionally hard working MP.

This proposal is in recognition of his service during his time as MP and his continued commitment to good causes in the borough, including chair of the Youth Zone and governor at Blackburn's College Centre.

#### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council may spend such reasonable sum as they think fit for the purpose of presenting an address, or a casket containing an address to a person on whom they have conferred the title. This cost will be incurred from existing budgets.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

In order to confer the title of Honorary Freeman on anyone, Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to pass a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the councilors voting at a meeting.

#### **7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

As per the financial implications.

#### **8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

None

#### **9. CONSULTATIONS**

Not applicable

#### **Contact Officer:**

**Chief Executive, Harry Catherall**

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015

Background Papers/Information: <https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Freemen-of-the-Borough.aspx>