



## Committee report

Committee	<b>EXTRA-ORDINARY COUNCIL</b>
Date	<b>13 MARCH 2019</b>
Title	<b>FREEDOM OF THE ISLE OF WIGHT</b>
Report of	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER</b>

---

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Under the Local Government Act 1972, councils can bestow the Honorary Freedom of the Borough to 'persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough'.
2. The Honorary Freedom of the Isle of Wight is the highest distinction this authority can bestow on an individual. The act requires that a special resolution of the full council that confers the Freedom of the Isle of Wight must be passed by two-thirds of members attending and eligible to vote.
3. It is proposed that Dr Desmond Murphy be bestowed with the Honorary Freedom of the Isle of Wight in recognition of his role in establishing and developing the Mountbatten Hospice on the Isle of Wight, improving end of life care on the Isle of Wight for residents, and their families.

### BACKGROUND

4. Dr Desmond Murphy MBChB, FRCP (GLASG.), FRCP, Consultant Respiratory Physician moved to the Isle of Wight in 1981, having been a Senior Registrar at the John Radcliffe Hospital. As a chest physician, Dr Murphy was already familiar with end of life care through his eight years of specialist training and caring for lung cancer patients from diagnosis through to terminal care. His new role did not specifically include setting up a Hospice.
5. Before taking up his new role, he was involved in approving plans to knock down a small building at the former Fairlee Hospital (previously used to house infectious patients), and this was established as the site of the new hospice. Not all initially thought a hospice was necessary and funding issues also arose.
6. Dr Murphy had his role as a full-time consultant physician to fulfil, a commitment to developing the speciality of Respiratory Medicine, as well as the planning of the new hospice's design and staffing.

7. 'Earl Mountbatten House', as it was then known, was formally opened on 13th October 1982 by HRH the Duchess of Kent. Dr Murphy carried out twice weekly ward rounds.
8. The Hospice gradually increased its staff and at an 18-month review of the unit there had been 289 patients referred to the unit and 203 admissions. At this time the Hospice was as busy as the busiest hospice units in the country.
9. This led to a further increase in staffing being agreed and under Dr Murphy's leadership, services were gradually expanded to provide day patient care and more care at home. This meant that more patients could die in the peace, comfort and security of their own home, surrounded by those closest to them. With the Hospice established, Dr Murphy's focus was to maintain the high standards of the comprehensive holistic care that was being provided, as well as continuing the high standards of education.
10. The support of the community was also clear as by 1989, there were more than 60 lay volunteers and strong financial support for the hospice.
11. In a book written about his experiences of setting up the Island's only hospice, Dr Murphy said: "As I look back over the 30 years, I am very proud of my role in setting up a service which, for Islanders, has brought great benefits.....it was a privilege to be so closely involved with patients and their families at such a critical moment of their lives. The most grateful patients I ever had throughout my whole career were those who were close to death, and knew it. They would shake or hold my hand and look into my eyes and say thank-you. I knew they were really saying goodbye."

#### FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

12. The costs of convening the extraordinary meeting and any associated costs relating to the consideration of bestowing the Freedom will be met from within existing Democratic Services budgets.

#### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. Section 249 Local Government Act 1972 empowers a local authority to confer the "Freedom of the Borough" (referred to in this report as the "Freedom of the Isle of Wight") to a person of distinction, or a person who has rendered eminent services to the Borough.
14. The Freedom of the Borough is the highest honour that the council can grant and it should be used sparingly and awarded on merit to exceptional persons.
15. Conferring the Freedom of the Isle of Wight does not grant the title holder any privileges, legal rights or responsibilities.

#### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

16. The council, as a public body, is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. No adverse impact arises from this report.

## OPTIONS

17. (a) To confer the Freedom of the Isle of Wight on Dr Desmond Murphy in recognition that he is a person of distinction who established and developed the Mountbatten Hospice on the Isle of Wight, continuing to improve end of life care on the Isle of Wight for residents and their families.
18. (b) Not to confer the Freedom of the Isle of Wight on Dr Desmond Murphy.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

19. The granting of the Freedom of the Isle of Wight must be to someone who is either a person of distinction or who has provided eminent services to the Island. To award the Freedom without applying the criteria will result in the honour being devalued.
20. As indicated in the report, the Freedom of the Isle of Wight is the highest honour the council can grant. The report sets out how Dr Desmond Murphy meets the criteria.

## RECOMMENDATION

21. To confer the Freedom of the Isle of Wight on Dr Desmond Murphy in recognition that he is a person of distinction who established and developed the Mountbatten Hospice on the Isle of Wight, continuing to improve end of life care on the Isle of Wight for residents and their families.

Contact Point: Helen Miles, Assistant Director of Corporate Service and Monitoring Officer,  
☎01983 821000 e-mail [helen.miles@iow.gov.uk](mailto:helen.miles@iow.gov.uk)

HELEN MILES  
Assistant Director of Corporate Service and Monitoring Officer