

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee:	Council	Date:	24 April 2018
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.00 - 7.40 pm
Members Present:	Councillors D Stallan (Chairman), R Bassett (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, A Beales, N Bedford, W Breare-Hall, R Brookes, R Butler, G Chambers, K Chana, D Dorrell, R Gadsby, A Grigg, Hadley, S Heap, L Hughes, R Jennings, J Jennings, S Jones, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, A Lion, L Mead, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, A Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, C C Pond, C Roberts, D Roberts, B Rolfe, P Stalker, S Stavrou, D Sunger, E Webster, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley		
Apologies:	Councillors N Avey, H Brady, J Knapman, Y Knight, M McEwen, B Sandler and M Sartin		
Officers Present:	D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), A Hall (Director of Communities), S Hill (Assistant Director (Governance)), P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), P Maginnis (Assistant Director (Human Resources)), R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), P Seager (Chairman's Secretary) and A Rose (Marketing & Digital Content Officer)		

110. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Assistant Director, Governance reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by members of the Council under this item.

112. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements for this meeting.

113. FREEDOM OF THE DISTRICT - 56 SQUADRON ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Chairman welcomed Members, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Essex Michael Chapman, and the Officer Commanding 56 Squadron of the Royal Air Force (RAF), Wing Commander Matt Fleckney and honoured guests to the Extraordinary Council meeting.

The Chairman advised that Epping Forest District had a long distinguished association with the RAF, which had recently marked their 100th Anniversary on 1 April 1918. The relationship had begun as early as 1916 with the North Weald Royal Flying Corps and many areas had been impacted by the RAF including Stapleford Abbots, Willigale, Blake Hall, Nazeing and Chigwell.

The Chairman invited Councillor B Rolfe to move the Motion to confer the Freedom of the District on 56 Squadron – “the Royal Air Force” and express the residents’ thanks for the service and sacrifices of the armed services.

Councillor A Grigg seconded the Motion and called on all members to support the resolution. As a North Weald Ward Member, she advised that the airfield had played its part in history, with Squadron 56 taking part in battles including Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain. She advised that although Squadron 56 was now based at RAF Waddington, it still retained close links with the airfield and local community. The Squadron’s Standard was held at St Andrews Church, North Weald which was also the resting place of some casualties. The Hurricane was the emblem and talisman of North Weald Airfield and the replica at the gates of the airfield was tribute and symbolised the Hurricane of the 56 Squadron. This honour, the Freedom of the District was a symbol of gratitude, a gesture of friendship and thanks to the 56 Squadron for the part they played in the history of the District.

Members and Officers paid tribute to the history of the 56 Squadron from personal stories to the history of the Squadron and how the District had played its part. This honour was a tribute to the bonds of friendship the Royal Air Force has with the District.

There upon the following motion was moved by Councillor B. Rolfe and seconded by Councillor A. Grigg

“That, in the year of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918, this Council reaffirms its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and the bonds of friendship between our Armed Forces and the people of Epping Forest District through the conferral of the Freedom of the District on 56 Squadron – the Royal Air Force.”

Carried Unanimously

The Wing Commander Matt Fleckney accepted the Freedom of the District on behalf of 56 Squadron and spoke as follows;

“Chairman of Council, Members of Council and resident of the District, may I say thanks. It was with great pleasure that I, as the Commander of 56 Squadron Royal Air Force accept the Freedom of Epping Forest District on behalf of the Squadron.

The Royal Air Force has had a long and important connection to this District from the early days of military aviation in World War I, with the opening of the airfield at North Weald in 1916, to the front line at the Battle of Britain and the Royal Air Force’s finesse hour, through to the jet age of the 1950’s & 1960’s. The Royal Air Force has found itself living amongst the residents of the District and when necessary fighting from these stations, often in the very skies above our heads. The airfields at Stapleford, Chipping Ongar, Chigwell, North Weald, the decoy site at Nazeing and the former sector control centre at Blake Hall, all stand as testimony to this history.

Number 56 Squadron’s connection with Epping Forest District started in 1927 when the Squadron took up station in North Weald and continued through to the end of the Battle of Britain. It was here on the 6 September 1939, that 56 Squadron suffered the RAF first casualty of WWII, the Pilot Officer Montague Hulton-Harrop, was tragically shot down by friendly fire. It was also fitting, that some Members of the Council could trace their family connections to service on the 56 Squadron during this period. It was this history, persevered locally and so ably by the Royal Air Force association, that has seen North Weald develop into the Squadron’s spiritual home. Such that our last

Squadron Standard was laid at St Andrews Church, the cemetery of which was the final resting place of Pilot Officer Hulton-Harrop.

In reaffirming our claim to this District as our spiritual home, we were honoured in June 2016 to celebrate our Squadron centenary with a church service at St Andrews and celebrations held at North Weald Airfield. The conferring of the Freedom of the District became a specially poignant this year as the Royal Air Force reached 100 years of service and this continued the long tradition of recognition and support that this District has given to the Royal Air Force during its first century. I look forward with great anticipation to the summer when the Squadron exercises the right of the Freedom grants for the first time.”

The Freedom of the District was sealed and signed by the Chairman and Wing Commander Matt Fleckney.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

- (1) Then on the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the RAF on 1 April 1918, the historic links between the communities of Epping Forest District and the Royal Air Force be celebrated;
- (2) “That, in the year of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918, this Council reaffirms its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and the bonds of friendship between our Armed Forces and the people of Epping Forest District and the confers the Freedom of the District on 56 Squadron – the Royal Air Force”; and
- (3) That Wing Commander Matthew Fleckney MA RAF receives the Freedom of the District on behalf of 56 Squadron.

CHAIRMAN