



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

Purpose: Noted

Date: **28 September 2022**

Title: **HER MAJESTY THE LATE QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM
JUBILEE MEDALS**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. This paper reports to the Standards and Governance Committee on the Service's position on the eligibility for Her Majesty the Late Queen Elizabeth the Second Platinum Jubilee Medals. This follows a deputation at July's Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on the exclusion of control room staff from the medal's eligibility.
2. Fire services had no role in determining the medal's eligibility criteria. The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (commonly known as "HD Committee") is responsible for the medal, in consultation with central government departments. The criteria for the Platinum Jubilee Medal was the same as for the Gold and Diamond Jubilee medals, principally covering emergency responders who physically attend emergencies. Fire control staff fall outside this definition. While some services have chosen to award medals to their control staff, this is explicitly outside the eligibility criteria and these medals could be forfeited.

BACKGROUND

3. The HD Committee is responsible for Jubilee medals (as well as other honours). The Committee is the policy-making body for the honours system and gives advice directly to the Sovereign on honours including new awards. It comprises senior officials from the Civil Service and Royal Household – ministers have no role in the process.

4. While the Committee is responsible for policy, each government department is responsible for upholding the integrity of each medal – as well as its distribution - within the sectors for which they are responsible. In the case of fire, this falls to the Home Office.
5. In relation to the Platinum Jubilee Medal, following a consultation with other government departments, the HD Committee decided to maintain consistency in eligibility criteria with previous jubilee medals. The Home Office issued the following criteria (attached at appendix A) to fire services: someone is eligible if they “*deal with emergencies as part of their conditions of service.*” Dealing with emergencies was defined as “*being called to the scene of 999 response calls and personnel who are potentially placing themselves in danger*”. Regardless of their merits, control staff fall outside this definition, something the Home Office explicitly made clear. This exclusion equally applied to control staff in policing and healthcare.
6. The decision to exclude control staff was one which we and others in the fire sector contested, as well as one that the Fire Brigades Union campaigned against. Letters between the fire sector (from the National Fire Chiefs Council in a joint letter with the National Police Chiefs Council and Association of Ambulance Chief Executives) and the Home Office are attached at appendices B and C whereby the Home Office’s Permanent Secretary resisted calls to broaden the criteria.
7. While we recognise the vitally important role of our control staff provide, the command decisions they make and the challenging - and at times distressing - calls they handle, the criteria is clear that control staff are excluded.
8. The deputation said some fire services had awarded their control staff medals (for both the Platinum and Diamond Jubilees). Ultimately, fire services had no right to do this and chief fire officers had no authority or flexibility to broaden the eligibility criteria. For the Diamond Jubilee in 2012, the then Fire Minister (Sir Bob Neill) wrote to chief fire officers giving them a “degree of latitude” to recognise control staff who attend the scene of an incident. This was not repeated for the Platinum Jubilee.
9. The Home Office could – should its Permanent Secretary wish – revoke individual medals if the recipient is not entitled to it. We understand the Home Office has reported some fire services to the HD Committee and Department for Culture, Media and Sport (the government department with responsibility for this particular medal). We are not aware of any outcome or follow-up sanction.

10. We will continue to lobby for the inclusion of control staff in future awards, a position shared by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

11. Supporting our people is a Service priority. This decision has created a divide between our firefighters and control staff with our control staff feeling excluded. We've taken the time to explain the position to them and we will continue to work with them to foster an inclusive culture across the Service, recognising their hard work and dedication particularly through both the pandemic and recent hot spell.
12. But we recognise the damage this decision has caused. To provide some recognition to staff who didn't qualify for a medal – including our non-operational staff as well as those in control – a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Coin was commissioned by the fire sector. This has been awarded to those remaining HIWFRS staff, albeit we appreciate this is not the same as a medal.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. As said above, each fire service had to apply specific eligibility criteria when determining who was entitled to a medal. It is within the gift of government departments to request the return of a medal should it be determined it was awarded to somebody who fell outside the eligibility criteria.

CONCLUSION

14. Control operators are a vital part of our team and work alongside our operational crews when responding to incidents. The Service has every sympathy with the deputation and agrees that their service should be recognised by the Platinum Jubilee medal. However, this issue is beyond the Service's control, and we had to operate within the set eligibility criteria, thereby excluding these essential colleagues.

RECOMMENDATION

15. The position regarding the eligibility of the Her Majesty the Late Queen Elizabeth the Second Platinum Jubilee Medals is noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

Appendices

[Appendix A: Home Office Jubilee Medal Criteria, 2 February 2021](#)

[Appendix B: Letter to Home Office's Permanent Secretary from NFCC, NPCC and AACE, 1 March 2021](#)

[Appendix C: Home Office's Permanent Secretary response to NFCC, NPCC and AACE, 15 March 2021](#)

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