

Committee(s)	Dated:
General Purposes Committee of Aldermen	19 October 2021
Subject: Privileged Regiment Status: 256 (City of London) Field Hospital	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	7.b.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Mr. Remembrancer	For Decision
Report author: James Edwards, Remembrancer's Officer	

Summary

This report sets out the case for the conferring on 256 (City of London) Field Hospital the status of a Privileged Corps of the City of London.

Recommendation

The Committee is invited to recognise 256 (City of London) Field Hospital as a Privileged Corps of the City of London.

Main Report

Background

1. The status of a Privileged Corps is a distinction which may be conferred on military units by the Corporation, including by the Court of Aldermen, to mark a particular affinity and association with the City of London. The privilege is the modern expression of an ancient immunity from military impressment, asserted by the citizens of London at least since the 14th century. It recognised those military bodies with London origins considered to have been assembled in a manner respectful of this immunity.
2. By tradition this meant that the privilege was confined to regiments which could be shown to have been descended from the "trained bands" of the City (an important local militia in the 16th and 17th Centuries under the control of the civic authorities), or from regiments recruited from within the City with the assent of the Lord Mayor in the period following the Restoration. The status was originally conferred exclusively on Army regiments, which enjoy the distinction of marching through the City, on such days as may be agreed between them and the Lord Mayor, with "drums beating, colours flying and

bayonets fixed". (The 'privileged' mode of marching is symbolic of the old method of recruitment "by beat of drum.")

3. In more recent years the privilege has been extended to regiments and corps established since the Restoration which have close associations with the City. The current list of Privileged Corps is noted in the annex to this report. The associations are evidence-based and include the need to show recruitment "by beat of drum" in accordance with the origin of the tradition.

The History of 256 (City of London) Field Hospital

4. 256 (City of London) Field Hospital is the Army Reserve hospital in London and was formed in October 1995 from the amalgamation of three London-based Territorial Army medical units: 217 (London) General Hospital (Volunteers), 257 (Southern) General Hospital (Volunteers) and 221 (Surrey) Field Ambulance (Volunteers). These three units were themselves the successors of previous London-based volunteer units, two of which could draw their descent back to the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps formed in 1885.
5. 217 (London) General Hospital (Volunteers), for example, trace their descent to the Company of Volunteer Medical Staff Corps established in 1885 at Birkbeck College via 217 (Eastern) General Hospital, 167 (City of London) Field Ambulance, and the 3rd London (City of London) Field Ambulance Territorial Force. 221 (Surrey) Field Ambulance trace their descent from the Woolwich Company of the Volunteer Medical Staff Corps via 221 (Surrey) Field Dressing Station, 47 (Home Counties) Field Ambulance Territorial Army, 140 (County of London) Field Ambulance, and the 4th and 5th (London) Field Ambulances.
6. While these Corps were established only in 1885, the origins of military medicine and surgery within the City of London can be recorded as early as 1368, when the Master Surgeons formed a guild (which later merged with that of the Barbers). It was also from the City and the Royal Colleges that the Army of the sixteenth century sourced its military surgeons, with the General Master of the Ordnance writing to Queen Elizabeth I, 'that he had recruited 72 Surgeons from London' to support the conflict with Spain.
7. The Company of Surgeons supplied medical personnel to both sides in the War of the Three Kingdoms, though given Parliament's control of London, they had the greater supply. Following the creation of the New Model Army – the precursor to the modern standing army – the Livery Companies' and City's role in providing surgical personnel, surgical material and medicines to the Army and Navy became increasingly formalised until, after the Restoration, the first Surgeon-General (1664), Apothecary-General (1686) and Physician-General (1687) were appointed. The close relationship between the City's hospitals and the Armed Forces is also seen in the 1665 authorisation by the Commission for the Sick and the Hurt for half of the City's hospital beds, principally in St Thomas', to be reserved for the Army in the absence of military hospitals. The Unit has asserted that the governance of the nascent Army Medical Services was effectively led by the institutions of the City of London until the formal establishment of the Army Medical Department in the 18th century.

256 (City of London) Field Hospital and its City connections

8. 256 (City of London) Field Hospital enjoys a number of connections with the civic City. The Corps is affiliated to the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, the Worshipful Company of Barbers, and the Worshipful Company of Cutlers, continuing links which its predecessor units had formed with the Livery. The Unit has also taken part in the Lord Mayor's Show in recent years.
9. The Unit was bestowed with the City of London title in 1995 to recognise its close association with the City. In 1998, the City Corporation hosted a reception for the Unit to mark the centenary year of the Royal Army Medical Corps. From 1996 to 2000, Alderman Sr John Chalstrey, who served as Lord Mayor from 1995-1996, was honorary colonel of 256 (City of London) Field Hospital in recognition of his career as a surgeon.

Deployments and COVID-19

10. Today, 256 (City of London) Field Hospital is one of the 10 Regional Reserve Hospitals that has a workforce drawn from London and the South East NHS Trusts. It is able to deploy as part of the wider hospital system, and can deliver a mobile field medical unit with an Emergency Department, Critical Care, Surgical Theatres, Wards, Imaging, and Laboratories in support of the Armed Forces during conflict and humanitarian disasters. It trains and develops its personnel who work and live in London to improve patient care for both its military patients and those that are received into the care of the NHS.
11. In recent years 256 (City of London) Field Hospital has deployed as a Unit and has also provided personnel to support operations and deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans Conflict, Oman, and West Africa, including to Serra Leone during the Ebola Crisis.
12. Most recently, personnel from the Unit, including its former Commanding Officer, Colonel Ashleigh Boreham, were deployed as part of the military response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Col Boreham headed the advisory team which helped convert the ExCel centre into London's Nightingale Hospital.
13. Noting the convention in paragraph 2 by which Privileged Regiments have traditionally recruited "by beat of drum" within the City, 256 (City of London) Field Hospital – having no history of recruitment in this manner – conducted a recruitment exercise in Guildhall Yard on 23 September 2020 to satisfy this criterion. Volunteers from the Unit handed out recruitment flyers to members of the public passing by Guildhall. A manned information stall was also set up in the Yard. As a recruitment event it can be said to have met the traditional requirement. Photographic evidence of the recruitment exercise is also annexed to this report.

Conclusion

14. Examination of the connections between 256 (City of London) Field Hospital and the City of London and the actions of the Corps with respect to recruitment noted at paragraph 13 above disclose a sufficiency of evidence to justify its treatment as a Privileged Corps of the City.

Recommendation

15. The Committee is invited to endorse the recommendation as set out at the beginning of this report and to commend it to the Court of Aldermen.

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Annex One
List of the Privileged Regiments

- The Royal Marines
- Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment
- The Grenadier Guards
- The Honourable Artillery Company
- The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
- The Coldstream Guards
- The Household Cavalry, comprising the Blues and Royals and the Life Guards
- The London Regiment
- 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal & Search)
- 71 (City of London) Yeomanry Signal Regiment

Privileged Corps

- 600 (City of London) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force
- H.M.S. President
- The Intelligence Corps (conferred through 3 Military Intelligence Battalion)
- The First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps)

Annex Two

Images taken at 256 (City of London) Field Hospital's recruitment exercise in Guildhall Yard on 23rd September 2021.

