

**COUNCIL
26 JANUARY 2023**

ADMISSION AS HONORARY FREEWOMAN

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Jonathan Dulston, Leader and all Cabinet Members**

Responsible Director - Ian Williams, Chief Executive

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To recommend that the service of two Councillors and one former Councillor be recognised by admitting Councillors Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long as 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington.

Summary

2. The Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to admit 'persons of distinction' and persons who have 'rendered eminent service' to the borough as an 'Honorary Freeman' or 'Honorary Freewoman' of Darlington. The title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman is the highest civic honour that the Council is able to bestow.
3. It is proposed that Councillors Mrs Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long are admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.
4. In order to admit a person as 'Honorary Freewomen', a special meeting of Council will need to be convened for this purpose. At this meeting two-thirds of Members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:-
 - (a) To agree to the proposal that Councillors Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington' as a fitting way to recognise and honour the service of those individuals.
 - (b) To agree to a Special meeting of the Council to be convened in February 2023, to enable Members to formally vote (with a two-thirds majority) on a resolution that Councillors Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freewoman of Darlington'.

- (c) To authorise the Assistant Director, Law and Governance to finalise the arrangements for the Special meeting of the Council, the conferment of the award and titles, and an appropriate event to follow on from that meeting.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) To recognise the long and eminent service of those individuals by the conferment of the title of 'Honorary Freewoman'
- (b) For decisions to be made in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

Ian Williams
Chief Executive

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Luke Swinhoe x5490

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder.
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There are no issues in relation to Carbon Impact
Diversity	There are no issues relating to Diversity which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	All Wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	There is no impact on any particular group
Budget and Policy Framework	This report requests additional funding as there is no current budget allocation.
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	There are no issues in relation to the Council Plan.
Efficiency	This report does not have any direct impact on efficiency.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

7. The Honorary Freedom of the Borough is the highest distinction a local authority can bestow on an individual. The Local Government Act 1972 (Section 249) allows Councils to admit as Honorary Freeman or Freewoman 'persons of distinction' and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough'.
8. It is an honour that is sparingly awarded. The last recipient was the former Leader of the Council Bill Dixon in 2019.
9. Honorary Freemen or Freewomen are purely honorary positions, although they can play a part in Civic and Ceremonial events in the Borough.
10. The proposal is to confer the award on Councillors Mrs Heather Scott OBE, Mrs Doris Jones BEM and former Councillor Mrs Dorothy Long, for the eminent service they have rendered to the Borough of Darlington.

Councillor Mrs Heather Scott OBE

11. Councillor Mrs Heather Scott was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1976 to serve the Park West Ward.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council, Councillor Mrs Scott has been:

Leader of the Conservative Group
Leader of the Council from 2019 to 2022
First female Leader of the Council in its 152 year history
Mayor 1988/1989
Chair of Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
A member of a number of other committees

During her leadership of the Council, Councillor Mrs Scott oversaw the development of the Treasury campus and a number of other major infrastructure projects and the response to the coronavirus pandemic

In 1989 Councillor Mrs Scott received an OBE in recognition of her voluntary and community service.

Councillor Mrs Scott is a member of Rotary, a founder member of the Darlington and District Hospice Movement and a former chair of the Friends of the Bowes Museum.

Councillor Mrs Doris Jones BEM

12. Councillor Mrs Doris Jones was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1983 to serve the Haughton East Ward. Following her move to Middleton St George, she has represented the Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward since 1987.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council Councillor Mrs Jones has been:

Mayor 2002/2003
Chair of the Planning Committee since 2019
A member of a number of other Committees

Councillor Mrs Jones is a Director of Teesside International Airport

Councillor Mrs Jones received a British Empire Medal in 2015 in recognition of her commitment to her ward and work.

Councillor Mrs Jones was a member of Middleton St George Parish Council from 1995 to 2016, including 12 years as Chair. She stood down from the Parish Council in 2016 to be Mayoress to her husband Councillor Brian Jones.

Mrs Dorothy Long

13. Mrs Dorothy (Dot) Long was elected as a Member of Darlington Borough Council in 1976 and represented the Northgate Ward from 1976 to 1979 and then from 1983 to 2015.

As a Member of Darlington Borough Council Mrs Long has been:

Chair of the Nuclear Issues Sub Committee
Chair of the Leisure Services Committee
Mayor 2001/2002
A member of Cabinet
Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee 2009 - 2015

Mrs Long was involved in bringing the Eastbourne Sports Complex into being, supporting the creation of the sculpture 'Train' by David Mach in 1997, and the reimagining and conservation of South Park.

Mrs Long had a regional role as Chair of the Museums, Libraries and Archive Council

On leaving the Council, Mrs Long continued in her role as Associate Manager of a mental health trust, sitting on review panels until 2020.

14. In order to admit a person as an 'Honorary Freewoman', a special meeting of Council will need to be convened for this purpose. At this meeting two-thirds of members present must vote in favour of the resolution.

Conclusion

15. Should the Council agree to confer honours the formal resolutions and ceremony would take place at a Special Council meeting in February 2023. It is requested that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Law and Governance to make the necessary detailed arrangements in consultation with the individuals concerned.
16. It is proposed that after the formal Special Council meeting has concluded that those honoured, their guests and Members could attend a buffet in Central Hall (Dolphin Centre). It is estimated that the costs would be in the region of £3,000.

Consultation

17. Consultation has taken place with the relevant Group Leaders who are in favour of the proposals