

**COUNCIL
18 JULY 2019**

HONORARY FREEMAN AND HONORARY ALDERMEN

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Heather Scott, Leader

Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Managing Director

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To recommend that the long service of former Councillors who did not stand for re-election in the 2019 Local Government Election be recognised by admitting Bill Dixon as a 'Honorary Freeman' and bestowing the title of 'Honorary Alderman' on David Lyonette and Tony Richmond.

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 former Councillor and Leader of the Council, Bill Dixon is admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freeman of Darlington'.
4. The Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' to former members of Council who have 'rendered eminent service' to the Council.
5. It is proposed that the title of 'Honorary Alderman' is conferred to David Lyonette and Tony Richmond.
6. In order to admit a person as an 'Honorary Freeman' or to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' 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

7. To agree the proposals that Bill Dixon be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freeman of Darlington' and that David Lyonette and Tony Richmond be conferred the title of 'Honorary Alderman' are a fitting way to recognise and honour the service of those past members of Council.

8. To agree to a Special Council to be convened as soon as can practicably be arranged to enable Members to formally vote (with a two-thirds majority) on a resolution that Bill Dixon be admitted to the title of 'Honorary Freeman of Darlington' and that David Lyonette and Tony Richmond be conferred the title of 'Honorary Alderman'.
9. To authorise the Assistant Director, Law and Governance to finalise the arrangements for Special Council, the conferment the award and titles, and an appropriate event to follow on from that meeting.

Reasons

10. To recognise the long and eminent service of former Members of the Council by the conferment of the titles of Honorary Freeman and Honorary Aldermen.
11. For decisions to be made in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Paul Wildsmith
Managing Director**

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Shirley Burton: Extension 5998
PB

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues in relation to Crime and Disorder
Health and Well Being	There are no issues in relation to Health and Well Being
Carbon Impact	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Diversity	There are no issues which this report needs to address
Wards Affected	There are no wards affected
Groups Affected	There is no impact on any specific group
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to Council policy
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There are no issues which this report needs to address
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

Honorary Freeman of Darlington – Bill Dixon

12. The Honorary Freeman of Darlington 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 person who has 'rendered eminent services' to the Borough.
13. It is an honour that is sparingly awarded. The last recipients were the late John Williams and Alisdair MacConachie in November 2011.
14. The Honorary Freemen or Freewomen are purely honorary positions, although they can play a part in Civic and Ceremonial events in the Borough.
15. The proposal is to confer the award on Bill Dixon, former Leader of the Council for the eminent service he has rendered to the Borough of Darlington.
16. Bill Dixon served for 40 years as a member of the Council having been first elected as a Councillor in 1979 aged 26 and served continuously thereafter until standing down in May this year. Bill Dixon served as the Mayor of Darlington in the year 1999/2000. He became a Cabinet Member in 2001 and served continuously on Cabinet following then and became the Leader of the Council in 2011 (he was elected Deputy Leader in 1991). He was at the forefront of many local and regional issues, including the formation of the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the devolution of funding. During his Leadership the Council had to deal with unprecedented reductions in central government funding which required very difficult decisions and a more innovative use of resources in order to balance the budget, which was achieved. A greater focus was given during his tenure as Leader to economic growth, jobs and housebuilding.
17. In order to admit a person as an 'Honorary Freeman', 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.

Honorary Alderman - David Lyonette and Tony Richmond

18. The Local Government Act 1972 (section 249) enables the Council to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' to former members of Council who have 'rendered eminent service' to the Council. Unlike the conferment of 'Honorary Freeman' the conferment as an 'Honorary Alderman' can only be made to a former member of the Council.
19. Should the Council wish to consider bestowing the title of 'Honorary Alderman' on recently retired Members with long service, it would be appropriate to bestow such an honour on former Councillors David Lyonette and Tony Richmond.
20. David Lyonette and Tony Richmond have 43 and 42 and a half years' service respectively on the Council. The next longest serving member who retired in May

2019 had 32 years' service. David Lyonette served as Mayor in the year 1992/1993 and also served as a member of Cabinet for a number of years. Tony Richmond served as Mayor in the year 1993/1994 and was for a number of years the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservative Group.

21. An Honorary Alderman is encouraged to attend all civic and ceremonial events when invited, promote civic pride in the Borough and attend Council meetings (without voting rights).
22. In order to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' 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

23. Should the Council agree to confer honours the formal resolutions and ceremony would take place at a Special Council meeting, (possibly in September or October 2019). 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.
24. 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

25. Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant Group Leaders who are in favour of the proposals.