

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO SPECIAL COUNCIL

DATE 22ND JULY 2015

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**PROPOSAL TO CONFER THE HONOUR OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH
ON BOB GIBSON OBE**

SUMMARY

Council is asked to give consideration to the granting of the Freedom of the Borough on Bob Gibson OBE.

The Council is empowered under section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer the title of Freeman of the Borough on persons / organisations of distinction and persons / organisations who have in the opinion of Council rendered eminent services to the Borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:-

1. The Council confirms that the Freedom of the Borough of Stockton be conferred upon Bob Gibson OBE.
2. His name is placed on the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough.
3. Bob Gibson OBE is presented with a sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution at the meeting of Council to be held on 25th November 2015.

DETAIL

1. The Council is empowered under section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer the title of Freeman of the Borough on persons / organisations of distinction and persons / organisations who have in the opinion of Council rendered eminent services to the Borough.
2. In order for the title to be conferred, not less than two thirds of Members in attendance and voting must agree at a council meeting specially convened for the purpose of doing so.
3. The award of Honorary Freeman is the highest honour a Council can bestow and as such is given rarely. Stockton Borough Council has a total of 20 Honorary Freeman:-
 - December 2011: The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Regiment
 - 8 July 2009: The Yorkshire Regiment
 - 21 January 2009: The Rifles
 - 29 April 1999: Mary Butterwick

- 13 September 1991: Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Leslie Cohen (OBE, TD, CPM, JP), James Henry Cooke and Margaret Eileen Jackson (MBE, JP)
 - 24 July 1985: Major Edward Cooper (VCJP)
 - 22 May 1977: The Light Infantry Regiment
 - 23 May 1968: the Rt. Hon. Horace Maybray King (PhD, MP), the Rt. Hon. Maurice Harold MacMillan (FRS), George Rowland Chetwynd Esq (CBE) and Mrs Helen M. Bott (BEM)
 - 14 February 1956: Charles William Allison (OBE, JP)
 - 16 April 1931: Thomas Downey
 - 10 February 1927: Leonard Ropner (JP)
 - 21 February 1921: Robert Bainbridge
 - 29 April 1907: Sir Frank Brown
 - 19 February 1904: Richard Hind and Jonathan Samual
 - 5 February 1891: Sir Robert Ropner (BART)
4. Council are recommended to confer the freedom of the Borough of Stockton on Tees on Bob Gibson OBE.

DETAIL

5. Bob Gibson OBE has been a leading character in Teesside politics for over three decades.
6. He came into politics through the Stockton Trades Council, before being elected in Parkfield Division to Cleveland County Council. But it was Stockton Council where his real passion lay, gaining a seat in 1983 in the Newtown Ward for Labour where he remained until 2015. He became Labour Group Leader in 1989.
7. In 1990 Bob took over as Stockton Council Leader continuing until May 2007, when he demonstrated that his priority and passions are for the borough's benefit rather than his own personal prestige – by agreeing to step aside and hand the role of Leader of the Council to the Conservative Party in an historic 'power-sharing' agreement.
8. He confidently led the Council through the turbulent local government re-organisation in the 1990's to achieve the status of a Unitary Authority (1 April 1996). He was completely undaunted by the challenge of being a single tier authority with responsibility for all local government functions within its area. In the years that followed his determination and energy helped to drive the Council forward in its pursuit of excellence in every area of service, leading to a variety of 'Best value' awards.
9. He personally led the pursual of winning a £37.5m from a City Challenge bid for Central Stockton. With the additional cash levered in it meant a £150m investment in the area over five years.

10. He has fulfilled a number of important roles which have shaped the direction and future of the people living in his former Ward, the Borough and the region such as:
- driving forward the provision of a single point of access for local residents to access vital services, agencies and programmes – leading to the creation of Newtown Community and Resource Centre.
 - Labour Group Leader (April 1989 - being a member and chair of a number of council committees (including Appeals & Complaints, Audit, Cabinet, Corporate Directors Remuneration Panel, Executive Scrutiny, Housing and Community Safety, Planning, Standards)
 - establishing and leading Stockton Renaissance Partnership Board – bringing together a cross-section of stakeholders (from the community, private and public sectors) to help drive forward the development of the borough to achieve the aspirations of its '2020 vision' to revitalise the area;
 - chairman of the Association of North East Councils and the North East Assembly;
 - a member of the Local Government Association (Teesside Branch, General Assembly and Urban Commission)
 - director of Tristar Housing (now part of Thirteen), Know How North East, Durham Tees Valley Airport Ltd., and Teesside Environmental Trust.
11. Under his dynamic leadership, the far-reaching and beneficial 'friendship' between the Council and Durham University was established – with the "*leading alternative to Oxford and Cambridge*" going on to develop its Queen's Campus (1992) site in the Borough with its two colleges and the Wolfson Research Institute (2001) – raising the profile and reputation of the area and attracting some of the 'brightest and best' students from across the UK, Europe and the world.
12. The significance of his outstanding contribution to Local Government in the North East literally received the royal seal of approval in the Queen's 2006 New Year Honours when he became Robert Gibson '*Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire* (OBE).
13. Ultimately, Robert Gibson has invested a significant proportion of his life as a faithful and loyal servant to this community, this council and this borough - enhancing its profile, its reputation and putting in place solid foundations for its future success and development – which makes him an ideal candidate for consideration to receive the Freedom of the Borough.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The Council will be required to comply with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 in granting Freedom of the Borough. This report and its consideration at a meeting of the Council specially convened for that purpose will assist in fulfilling that requirement.
15. The costs of adding the name of the Bob Gibson O.B.E. to the Roll of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and providing a sealed and illuminated copy of the Resolution in the form of a scroll, can be met from the civic budget for Law and Democracy for 2014/15.

RISK ASSESSMENT

16. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

17. This report is not subject to an Equality Impact Assessment as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change.

COUNCIL PLAN IMPLICATIONS

18. Strong local democracy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

19. Consultation has been undertaken with Group Leaders.

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Background Papers	None
Education Related Item	No
Ward(s) and Ward Councillors	All
Property Implications	None