



Northumberland County Council

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL

22nd March 2023

Honorary Freeman and Freewomen

Report of Glen Sanderson, Leader of the Council

Lead officer: Head of Democratic and Electoral Services

(1) Purpose of Report

To consider conferring the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the County of Northumberland on the persons listed.

(2) Recommendation:

(i) To confer the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman on the following:

- 1) Tony Gates, Chief Executive of Northumberland National Park, for services to Northumberland National Park;**
- 2) Winton Keenen QPM, Chief Constable of Northumbria Police (retires March 2023) for services to policing in Northumberland;**
- 3) Elizabeth Morgan, former Executive Director of Public Health, for services to Public Health particularly during the covid pandemic.**

(ii) To acknowledge and confirm provisions of section (33) of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008: Honorary Freeman/ Freewomen, whereby a person who, before the reorganisation date, had been admitted as an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of a local government area that was abolished by a section 7 Order (an 'abolished area') shall on that date be treated as having been admitted as an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the single tier Council.

(3) Key Issues

3.1 Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, empowers the Council to confer the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman to 'persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent service to the County'.

3.2 Further, Regulation 33 of The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008 states:

(1) A person who, before the reorganisation date, has been admitted as an honorary freeman of a local government area that is abolished by a section 7 order (an “abolished area”) shall, on that date, be treated as having been admitted as an honorary freeman of the area described in paragraph (2), notwithstanding that the area so described is not on that date an area to which persons may be admitted as honorary freemen

(2) The area is that which, on the reorganisation date, comprises or includes the abolished area, and for which, on and after that date, there is a single tier of local government.

3.3 Under the legislation, a formal vote is required to proceed. No fewer than two-thirds of those present at the Council meeting must agree the nomination. The decision of the Council on all nominations are final.

3.7 Should the vote be positive, at an extraordinary meeting of Council in May, those conferred with the title (or their representative) will be presented with a pin brooch and gift and given the opportunity to address the Council.

(4) Background

4.1 In September 2021, Council **RESOLVED** that a system to appoint Freemen and Freewomen of Northumberland be agreed and approved a Protocol (copy attached to this report). [Here is a link to the report](#)

4.2 The Freedom itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour, reflecting the eminence of the person on whom it is conferred or as recognition of significant and valuable services rendered to the County by that person.

4.3 It is normally an honour or award to men or women of note who have lived or worked in the County, and who are proud to be part of the County’s history by becoming a Freeman or Freewoman. The overriding principle is that the awards should be made on merit, defined as significant achievement or exceptional service and ‘gone the extra mile’.

4.4 The agreed protocol states that the Leader, in consultation with the Group Leaders, consider nominations and assess them against the criteria on behalf of their Groups via the Chief Executive.

4.5. The Leader of the Council and other political Group Leaders (on behalf of their Groups) have met to discuss nominations and they propose that the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman be conferred on the following persons who they deem have met the criteria as set out in the Protocol attached:

4.5.(i) Tony Gates, Chief Executive of Northumberland National Park, for services to Northumberland National Park;

4.5(ii) Winton Keenen QPM, Chief Constable of Northumbria Police (retires March 2023) for services to policing in Northumberland;

4.5(iii) Elizabeth Morgan, former Executive Director of Public Health, for services to the residents of Northumberland particularly during the covid pandemic.

(5) Implications

Policy	Protocol agreed by Council 21 September 2021
Finance and value for money	Small cost for gifts
Legal	<p>Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 empowers the Council to give the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman to ‘persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent service to the County’</p> <p>The legislation provides that the function of appointing Honorary Aldermen or Honorary Alderwomen shall be by a Council meeting specially convened for that purpose.</p> <p>Part 2 para. 3(9) of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are functions reserved to Full Council.</p> <p>These functions are set out within the terms of reference for Full Council in the Constitution.</p> <p>Section 33 of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) (Regulations) 2008 allows for the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman granted by a predecessor Council to become an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the single tier authority.</p> <p>Council Constitution Part 1 para 25 (Governance Arrangements) to confer the title of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman Freeman/Freewoman.</p>
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities	None

(Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment	None
Crime & Disorder	None
Customer Consideration	None
Carbon reduction	None
Health and Wellbeing	None
Wards	All

(6) Linked papers:

Report to Council 1 September 2021
 Local Government Act 1972 as amended
 Part 2 para. 3(9) of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000
 Section 33 of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) (Regulations) 2008

(7) Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Interim Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	Jan Willis
Executive Director of Transformation & Resources and S151 Officer	Suki Binjal
Chief Executive	Dr. Helen Paterson

Appendix 1 – Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman agreed by Council on 1 September 2021 (attached)

Author and Contact Details

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APPENDIX 1

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

PROTOCOL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY FREEMEN/ FREEWOMEN

Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 empowers the Council to give the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman to ***‘persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent service to the County’***.

1. Appointment

1.1 Nominations can be made by any serving Councillor to the Chief Executive. On receipt of a nomination, the Chief Executive will make the details available to Group Leaders, who will assess the nominee against the criteria.

1.2 All nominations for Honorary Freeman or Freewoman are treated in the strictest confidence and the nominee should not be informed that they have been nominated.

1.3 A unanimous decision is required to proceed. If Group Leaders are in agreement that the nominee should be made an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of Northumberland, the nominee will then be invited to accept the honour. If agreed, a special meeting of the Council will be convened in order for the nomination to be put before the Council and a formal vote taken.

1.4 No fewer than two-thirds of those present at the Council meeting must agree the nomination. The decisions of the Council on all nominations are final.

1.5 The awarding of the Freedom of Northumberland to Service Units *‘to march through the streets of the County with bayonets fixed, drums beating and Colours flying’* is different in that it is a generally accepted practice to provide a dignified and appropriate means of enabling the authority to honour a distinguished unit of HM Forces.

2. Role

2.1 To be granted the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman is a mark of distinction upon the person that the Council wishes to honour.

2.2 The Freedom itself carries no privilege and is purely an honour, reflecting the eminence of the person on whom it is conferred or as recognition of significant and valuable services rendered to the County by that person.

2.2 It is normally an honour or award to men or women of note who have lived or worked in the County, and who are proud to be a part of the County's history by becoming Freemen or Freewomen, or in the case of HM Services Units, Freedom of the County.

3. Criteria for the appointment of an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of Northumberland.

3.1 The overriding principle is that these awards should be made on merit, defined as:

- Significant achievement
- Exceptional Service

Awards should not be for a job well done or because someone has reached a particular level, but because the individual has 'gone the extra mile' in the contribution they have made or stand out above others in what has been achieved. Preference will be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to a person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected for their occupation.

3.2 The contribution to the community of Northumberland should involve one or more of the following:

- a Brought distinction to County life and enhanced the County's reputation in the area or activity concerned;
- b. A significant allocation of the person's time in serving members of the Community for the improvement of their wellbeing;
- c. The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a significant personal contribution has been made;
- d. Demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in the County;
- e A contribution which is seen to stand above the contributions of most others;

3.3 As this is the highest honour that a Council can grant, it should be used sparingly to preserve its status and value.