

Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 5 November 2025
Subject:	Freedom of the Borough	
Report of	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth	

Summary

1. The conferment of the Honorary Freedom of a Borough has been established since 1885 as the highest honour which the local authority can bestow. To be granted the title of Honorary Freeman is a mark of distinction upon the person whom the Council wishes to honour.
2. To be granted the title of Honorary Freeman is a mark of distinction upon the person whom the Council wishes to honour.
3. 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 city or borough by that person. It is normally an honour or award to men or women of note who have lived or worked in the city/borough, and who are proud to be a part of the city/borough's history by becoming freemen or in the case of HM Services Units, Freedom of the Borough. It should not be awarded to serving councillors.
4. The overriding principle is that these awards should be made on merit, defined as:
 - Achievement
 - Exceptional Service
5. To be considered, the nominee should meet at least two of the following criteria:
 - Delivered in a way that has brought distinction to borough life and enhanced the borough's reputation in the area or activity concerned
 - Contributed in a way to improve the lives of those less able to help themselves
 - Demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in the borough
6. The recommendation to confer the status of Freeman is made by Group Leaders and the Mayor, following nomination by any elected member. For candidates to be considered they must be able to demonstrate a strong and continuing connection with, and commitment to, the borough or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so, have enhanced the reputation of the borough.
7. To assist it is suggested that this could include the following:
 - Artistic and cultural endeavours
 - Business, economic growth and prosperity
 - Charitable work

- Improvement to the built and natural environment
 - Religious and spiritual life Sports activities
 - Civic service
8. Only in exceptional circumstances should consideration be given to the admission of organisations.
9. At a meeting of the Democratic Arrangements Forum Group Leaders considered the following nominations:
- Keith and Helen Atkinson – Nominated by the Labour Group
 - Councillor Joan Grimshaw – Nominated by the Labour Group
10. The Group Leaders agreed to progress these nominations.

Recommendation(s)

11. The Democratic Arrangements Forum recommends to Cabinet that both nominations be progressed and a ceremony to be arranged for January 2026.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

12. Group Leaders agreed that both nominees be progressed to recognise their achievements as well as their exceptional service.

Alternative options considered and rejected

13. No additional nominations were considered.

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Legal Implications:

14. The Freedom of the Borough protocol stipulates that the Group Leaders and the Mayor will consider the nomination against the criteria and decide if it should be submitted to Cabinet for consideration. Cabinet will then make a recommendation to Council that the honour is bestowed.
15. Alternatively they may decide that the nomination is not suitable as it does not meet the criteria.
16. The Leader shall report to Council and, should Council accept the nomination, a Special Meeting of Council would then be called to pass the resolution pursuant to Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, for the admission as Honorary Freemen of the Borough of the relevant persons

Financial Implications:

17. The cost associated with granting Freedom of the Borough will be met from within the existing democratic services budget.

Appendices:

None

Background papers:

Freedom of the Borough Protocol

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning