

**To the Chair and Members of the
COUNCIL**

FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH APPLICATION – BOBBIE ROBERTS MBE, JP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report asks Members to consider conferring the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts MBE JP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Council is asked to support the application and agree to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

3. Conferring the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts would allow the citizens of the Borough to offer recognition and endorsement of her efforts on behalf of the town and work on behalf of children and young people with additional needs locally, nationally and internationally.

BACKGROUND

4. Authorities are able to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on individuals who have provided exceptional service to their town or enhanced its reputation through their actions.
5. Mayor Ros Jones has approached the Council to ask them to consider bestowing this honour to Bobbie Roberts.
6. Bobbie Roberts has been a volunteer at Doncaster Deaf Trust for 37 years. During this time, she has championed the development of children and young people with additional needs. Bobbie works at the Trust five days a week and receives no remuneration for her efforts. She is committed to ensuring the future of the nursery, school, college and care home owned and operated by Doncaster Deaf Trust and enhancing the lives of the pupils and students supported therein.
7. Although the Deaf Trust receives government funding linked to the curriculum, purchasing of specialist audiology equipment, an accessible minibus, outdoor play and gym equipment, equipping a room with sensory equipment to support pupils and students with additional special needs, and payments for educational activity visits all require additional funding, Bobbie has raised the sums required to supply these items. The Executive Principal of the Trust and his team, have described these efforts as 'invaluable' and 'incomparable'.

8. Bobbie has been Chair of the Board of Trustees for 21 years and has been instrumental in the decision making processes of both the Trustees and the Board of Governors at the Trust. She has become an ambassador for both the Trust and for Doncaster, by attending international conferences across the world, sharing good practice in educating children and young people with additional needs, and promoting what the town and the Borough of Doncaster have to offer in developing students to their full potential. Bobbie is currently involved in a worldwide project to create an international sign language and has recently travelled to Estonia and Brazil, to help to develop and promote the 'Spread the Sign' initiative. Bobbie travels to London regularly to lobby Central Government about the educational needs of students with additional needs.
9. Bobbie actively engages members of local community groups to use facilities on the Deaf Trust campus. There are regular fundraising events at the site for local charities, including those coordinated in partnership with the Lions and Rotary Clubs. The sports fields are offered to community groups on a regular basis. Bobbie has developed lasting professional relationships with local service and ex-service personnel from the Armed Forces, and the Trust has recently hosted receptions for the Coldstream Guards and the Royal Horse Artillery after recent tours of duty in Afghanistan, in partnership with Doncaster Council and South Yorkshire Police. The Doncaster Community of Gurkhas has adopted Bobbie into their extended family in honour of her continued support and friendship.
10. Bobbie encourages her students and colleagues to aim high in their expectations; with her support, students have designed an award winning sensory garden at Chelsea Flower Show in partnership with Walkers Nurseries. One of the students at the Deaf Trust was recognised for his role as a deaf-football referee by carrying the Olympic Torch in 2012 and Bobbie arranged for the students to host a stop-off of the Olympic Torch Relay at the Deaf Trust, and the entire operations team were fed and looked after by the students.
11. In addition to her efforts on behalf of the Deaf Trust, Bobbie has been a member of the Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust Board for many years and is passionate about Doncaster, and the facilities on offer to its people. She has recently joined the Board of Trustees at the CAST Theatre. Bobbie has developed lasting working relationships with Doncaster College and many Officers, and Elected Members of Doncaster Council. Her drive, enthusiasm, determination and commitment continue to inspire people across the Borough.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASON FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. Option one is to recommend that Council supports the application and confer the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts. This is the recommended option in recognition of her contribution to Doncaster Deaf Trust, her commitment to supporting the pupils, students and staff at the nursery, school, college and care home owned and operated by the Deaf Trust, her endorsement and promotion of Doncaster locally, nationally and internationally and her continued support of local projects in Doncaster and across the Borough.
13. Option two is to decline the application to confer the Freedom of the Borough on Bobbie Roberts.

RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

14. There are no identified risks associated with this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 deals with the admission to the Freedom of the Borough of “persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough”. The Council is required to consider this application.
16. The title Freeman of the Borough is an honorary role. It offers no legal status and there is no remuneration linked to the honour.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. Those being honoured are given an informal civic reception, hosted by the Civic Mayor in the Mayor’s Parlour within the Mansion House, to include a light buffet and beverages at an approximate cost of £112. Recipients also receive a framed Freedom Scroll that costs approximately £625. The total cost of £737 will be funded from the Civic Mayor’s budget.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

18. Doncaster Council aims to be outstanding in all aspects of equality and diversity. The Council seeks to create an environment that promotes, values and celebrates equality and diversity ensuring everyone feels welcome and that individuals are treated fairly, equally and with respect and are not discriminated against on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. We will advance equality of opportunity, intend to eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations. All of these aims will be considered and upheld during the decision making process associated with this report.

CONSULTATION

19. The application has been considered initially by representatives of the Labour Group, Conservative Group and UKIP Group, who have given their approval as a Panel, for the application to be taken forward to be considered by Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

20. Emailed Freedom Application from Mayor Ros Jones on behalf of Bobbie Roberts MBE.

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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