

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH APPLICATION – SARAH STEVENSON MBE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report asks Members to consider conferring the Freedom of the Borough on Sarah Stevenson MBE.

RECOMMENDATION

2. The Committee is asked to support the application and recommend to Council that it agrees to bestow the Freedom of the Borough on Sarah Stevenson, to recognise her sporting achievements, her influence on the sport of Taekwondo nationally, her endorsement and promotion of local charities and continued support of sport in schools and martial arts clubs across the Borough.

BACKGROUND

3. 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.
4. Mr Gary Sykes, Taekwondo Master and Olympic Coach, has approached the Council to ask them to consider bestowing this honour to Sarah Stevenson.
5. Born in Doncaster, Sarah is arguably the most successful GB Taekwondo athlete in history. She became Junior World Champion in 1998 at the age of 13 and two years later became Senior World Champion, overcoming more mature and experienced athletes to achieve this goal. Sarah repeated this victory in 2005 and 2011 and has been Junior and Senior European Champion for over a decade.
6. At the age of 17, Sarah was the first female to represent the Great Britain Taekwondo Team at the Olympic Games in Sydney, Athens and Beijing. Despite a debilitating knee injury and the sad loss of both parents in 2011, she led the GB Taekwondo Team at the London 2012 Olympics. Sarah's career was acknowledged with the honour of being chosen to recite the Athlete Oath at the Opening Ceremony.
7. Sarah was honoured with an Honorary Doctorate from Sheffield Hallam University and the MBE during 2012. The profile of Taekwondo across Britain has been raised as a direct result of Sarah's success. Competitive Taekwondo has developed to a level whereby funding packages allow athletes to be paid whilst training and focus entirely on their performance. National Governing Bodies have been created and programmes have been agreed to encourage and nurture future champions.

8. Sarah continues to provide inspiration to young people in Doncaster and is an ambassador for sport to local schools and martial arts clubs across the Borough. She is currently involved in the 'Battle for Brazil' initiative, identifying talented young people to compete in the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil and is a member of the Olympic Taekwondo Coaching Squad.
9. Sarah actively supports Grief Encounter, a charity dedicated to helping families address issues caused by bereavement; Balls to Cancer, a charity that is researching causes of male cancer, St John's Hospice and Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASON FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

10. Option one is to recommend to Council support for the application and confer the Freedom of the Borough on Sarah Stevenson. This is the recommended option in order that Sarah's sporting achievements and her work in supporting local charities and promoting sport in schools and martial arts clubs in the Borough can be appropriately recognised.
11. Option two is to decline the application to confer the Freedom of the Borough on Sarah Stevenson.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. 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 convene an extraordinary meeting of Council to consider applications.
14. 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

15. Those being honoured will be given an informal civic reception hosted by the Civic Mayor. Recipients receive a framed Freedom Scroll that costs approximately £650

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Letter of request from Mr Gary Sykes

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