

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Council – 05 November 2025

Report Title

Proposal to Create an Honorary Freewoman of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

John Edwards, Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to grant the title of Freedom of the Borough to persons of distinction who have rendered eminent service to the Borough.

The Council is asked to consider a proposal endorsed by the Mayor and the Political Group Leaders, in accordance with the Authority's Protocol in respect of the award of the Freedom of the Borough, to create a new Honorary Freewoman of the Borough.

Recommendations

That in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her outstanding service to Children and Young People across the borough as a Foster Carer with over 50 years' service and in recognition of fostering over 250 young people, Christine Lunn MBE, be admitted Freedom of this Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Protocol for the Award of the Freedom of the Borough of Rotherham

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Proposal to Create an Honorary Freewoman of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham

1. Background

- 1.1 The origin of the Freedom of the Borough goes back to early medieval times, when with the growth of the great English towns, there emerged a class of citizen known as Freemen, who enjoyed important privileges in the government of their own and in the matter of corporate property, as against strangers and the rest of the inhabitants.
- 1.2 With the passing of the Honorary Freedom of the Boroughs Act 1885 the dignity attached to the Office of Freewoman was revived and enhanced. This Act conferred upon all Municipal corporations the power to admit as Honorary Freewoman of the Borough “persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough”. This can only be achieved by the Council voting at a specially called meeting and by a two-thirds majority.
- 1.3 The Freedom of the Borough is the highest Civic Award the Council can bestow.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 In 2018, the Council approved a protocol detailing the decision-making process for making the award of the Freedom of the Borough. A nomination for the award must be received and supported by at least ten Members of the Council prior to it being considered by the Mayor and Political Group Leaders, who will determine whether to recommend the award to the Council.
- 2.2 A nomination to admit Christine Lunn MBE as an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough of Rotherham was submitted by Councillor Victoria Cusworth, with the support of ten other councillors. The nomination set out the various outstanding achievements of Christine Lunn MBE on behalf of the Borough.
- 2.3 In accordance with the protocol, the Chief Executive arranged for the Mayor and political group leaders to review the nomination.
- 2.4 Following consideration of the nomination by Councillors Read, Z. Collingham and A. Carter, as political group leaders, this report has been prepared recommending the award to Christine Lunn MBE.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 It is recommended that, in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her outstanding service to Children and Young People across the borough as a Foster Carer with over 50 years’ service and in recognition of fostering over 250 young people, Christine Lunn MBE, be admitted as an Honorary Freewoman of this Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The protocol detailing the decision-making process for the award of the Freedom of the Borough sets out how the Chief Executive should consult the Mayor and Political Group Leaders prior to any recommendation being submitted to Council. This process has been followed in enabling this report to be presented to the Council.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Subject to the Council approving the recommendation to make the award of Freewoman of the Borough, at an Extraordinary Council Meeting, following consultation with the Mayor, to pass the formal resolution.
- 5.2 The Head of Democratic Services will be accountable for the implementation of the Council's decision and for establishing arrangements for the award of the Freewoman of the Borough.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 Section 249(9) of the Local Government Act 1972 allows a relevant authority to spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom the authority has conferred the title of Freewoman under subsection (5).
- 6.2 Framed Vellum Scroll (certificate) currently cost £1,795 each and Freedom of the Borough Pendant costs £765. These costs can be met from the budget.
- 6.3 It is proposed to hold a small Civic Reception following the Extraordinary Council Meeting, as recommended under the Freedom of the Borough protocol. The costs will be met through the budget for the Civic Office.
- 6.4 Overall, the cost is expected to be approximately £3,200.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 In accordance with Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council may by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council specifically convened with notice of the purpose, admit Honorary Freewoman of the place or area for which it is the authority persons/organisations of distinction and persons/organisations who have in its opinion rendered eminent services to the Borough.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no human resources implications associated with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 There are no direct implications associated with this report. However, Christine Lunn MBE is a Rotherham Foster Carer. She has fostered over 250 young people spanning over 50 years. Christine celebrated her 80th birthday in January 2025 and is still actively fostering and supporting Rotherham's children. Showing love, care and commitment to Rotherham's Looked After Children and their families.
- 9.2 Christine advocates tirelessly to encourage people to become a Foster Carer participating in recruitment campaigns and sharing her lived experience.
- 9.3 Christine's passion and commitment is fuelled by her beliefs that every child deserves a chance at a brighter future.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 There are no equalities or human rights implications associated with this report.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no Climate change implications associated with this report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no implications for partners arising from this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There are no risks directly associated with this report.

Accountable Officer(s)

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	13/10/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	14/10/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	08/10/25
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	Click here to enter a date.

The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services	14/10/25
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council - Councillor Read	23/10/25

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