HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Report of the Chief Executive

1.0   Purpose of Report

To consider recommending to Council to formally confer the Honorary Freedom of the City upon the England footballer Jordan Henderson to recognise the example of commitment and achievement he sets as an ambassador of Sunderland and role model for young people.

2.0   Description of Decision

To recommend to Council that:-

(i)   it agrees to the conferring, in accordance with the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, of the Honorary Freedom of the City upon Jordan Henderson.

(ii)   authority be given for the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree all appropriate arrangements for the formal ceremony at an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

3.0   Background

The Council has traditionally honoured notable citizens of Sunderland who have made significant contributions as ambassadors and positive role models for the city and it residents by conferring on them the Honorary Freedom of the City.

Members of the Council have now nominated the following candidate for consideration:-

3.1   Jordan Henderson

Born in 1990 in Herrington, Sunderland, Jordan Henderson joined the Sunderland AFC youth academy aged eight.

From this young age, it was immediately apparent to coaches and those around him, that he had the talent and commitment to succeed at the highest level in the game he loved.

A pupil at Farringdon Community Academy, where he is celebrated as an inspirational role model for all young people, he is fondly remembered by his teachers as a "model pupil" and someone who took a very focussed and professional approach to his sport and his life from an early age.

Alongside his natural talent and athletic ability, Jordan also recognised the importance of following a healthy and active lifestyle and rose through the ranks to make his debut for the Sunderland first team in 2008.

Not forgetting the support of his school, working closely alongside the football club to enable him to fulfil his potential, Jordan regularly returned to Farringdon Academy to do assemblies, presentations and talks to pupils.

Throughout his early professional career with Sunderland, he was again recognised as being very grounded, a great team-mate, committed to his training, and focused on making the best possible contribution on the pitch.

Having gained his full first international cap for England in 2010, Jordan came to the attention of Liverpool FC and was signed in 2011 on a long-term deal. Having been born and bred in Sunderland and a lifelong supporter of the club he had played for since being a young boy, Jordan described it as being hard to leave the city, but he was excited to embrace the opportunity ahead to continue to develop his career.

From there, flying the flag for Sunderland, he has gone on to play football at the highest national and international levels and currently has over 50 caps for England. He has captained Liverpool since 2015 and recently celebrated a great career highlight, with the team winning the UEFA Champions League.

Jordan is proud of his Sunderland roots, still takes a keen interest in local campaigns and developments and acts as an extremely positive role model and ambassador for the city of Sunderland.

4.0   Current Position

Given Sunderland's long tradition of conferring the Freedom of the City on those notable individuals who, through their various achievements, act as excellent role models and ambassadors for Sunderland, it is considered appropriate to recommend the Council to confer the Freedom of the City upon the nominee.

5.0   Reasons for Decision

The proposal will formally seal the relationship between the nominee and the City of Sunderland and will recognise his contribution to the city.

6.0   Alternative Options

There are no alternative options submitted for consideration, as the conferring of an honorary freedom is considered to be appropriate in order to recognise the outstanding contribution made by the nominated individual.

7.0   Background Papers

None.