

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL COUNCIL

5.00pm 24 JULY 2012

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Randall (Chair), Meadows (Deputy Chair), Brown, Cobb, Deane, Gilbey, Hamilton, Hawtree, Jones, J Kitcat, Lepper, Littman, Mac Cafferty, Mears, Mitchell, Morgan, A Norman, K Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Pissaridou, Shanks, Simson, Smith, G Theobald and Wells.

PART ONE

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1 There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in matters appearing on the agenda.

2. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

- 2.1 The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting which had been specially convened to consider the proposal to confer the honour of being a Freeman of the City on Steve Ovett, OBE. He also wanted to especially welcome Mrs. Sylvia Baker who had been the oldest Torch bearer in the city and coincidentally had taught Steve Ovett at Balfour Junior School.
- 2.2 The Mayor stated that the meeting was being webcast and that he was happy for photos to be taken during the meeting.
- 2.3 The Mayor stated that he had received a message from Tim Hutchins, organiser of the Brighton Marathon and a former running companion of Steve's here in Brighton, who had been unable to attend today's event. He had asked that his best wishes and congratulations be passed onto Steve for having his achievements recognised in this way.
- 2.4 The Mayor also stated that he wished to thank the supporters for providing the funding for the new statue that was to be unveiled along Madeira Drive after the current meeting, as well as Peter who took on the work to reproduce the statue that he had previously created. He also thanked the officers involved in enabling the meeting to be held and those who had arranged the unveiling of the statue, especially Jayne Babb.

3. HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE CITY

3.1 The Mayor stated that the Council was asked to consider the appointment of Steve Overt as an Honorary Freeman of the city of Brighton & Hove and he would be calling on the Leader of the Council and the respective Group Leaders to move and second the motion.

3.2 Councillor J. Kitcat stated that as Leader of the Council it was a great honour to be able to nominate Steve Overt to be made an Honorary Freeman of Brighton and Hove. Born in Brighton and educated in Varndean, Steve showed early promise as a teenage athlete and at football, opted in favour of athletics, a decision that was to prove wise during a brilliant career in middle distance running. Medals and more records followed including gold at the commonwealth games. His achievements, rivalries, successes and prowess made him one of the most newsworthy sport stars of the era and his continued professionalism, ambassadorial quality and legacy shine a light on his birthplace that aluminates us to this day.

In this Olympic year and with Steve visiting from his Australian home it's fitting that we honour his return both with this honorary title and the unveiling this evening of a replacement statue in his honour of the one that did a runner in 2007 from Preston Park. The city of Brighton and Hove is proud to bestow this honour and as Leader of the Council it is my pleasure to formally propose Steve Overt as honorary freeman of this city.

3.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that as the Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, he was pleased to be able to second the motion. Steve was a magnificent athlete, he was an example to young and old because the old thought they would have certainly beaten him, the young wanted to try and emulate him but nobody did. I believe that British middle distance running was never stronger than during the period of Overt and Coe and it was one of those times when we went to see a race and we didn't expect to have a British number one we expected British one and two, that was the strength and the rivalry between the two, I do believe, brought out the best but with our best here today I think his real achievement was his determination.

He was determined to beat himself, when his body was struggling, and by-george, he gave 110% to overcome himself and so often succeeded. It gives me the greatest of pleasure to formerly second the motion before us.

3.4 Councillor Mitchell stated that the Labour & Co-operative Group fully supported the proposal and she welcomed the opportunity to jointly second the motion. Steve no longer lives in the city but is often remembered and especially on the week of the Olympic opening ceremony of London 2012 there's so many young athletes taking part have looked to him and others like him for inspiration. We all know that Steve was born and schooled in the city and went on to great things in the world of athletics but things could have been very different and as a young man, as the Leader of the Council has just remarked, Steve was tipped to be a professional footballer but turned down his chance and swapped his boots for trainers saying he did not want to do a sport where he would have to rely on team mates. A feeling Mr Mayor that most of us involved with politics can probably sympathise with.

However the decision turned out to be the right one and Steve's dedication and self commitment saw him to go on and become a world class athlete and make the city and the country so proud of him. Brighton and Hove and its residents will always welcome Steve back and his statue, soon to be unveiled on the seafront, will serve as a constant reminder of the world class Olympian that he is.

- 3.5 Councillor Smith stated that he thought it was a marvellous idea and was duly deserved by Steve, who had been born in Brighton and whom the city was very proud. He could recall Steve's career and felt that having the statue provided a legacy that all could be proud of.
- 3.6 Councillor Mears stated that having been an avid supporter of Steve's, she was extremely pleased to be able to support the motion and to see a new statue being unveiled in the city. She hoped that his family would be happy to see that their support during his career had been recognised and noted that he was an inspiration to young athletes throughout the city and the country. She wished to offer her congratulations to Steve and to thank those for enabling the statue to be provided. The city was very proud of him.
- 3.7 Councillor Littman stated that he was honoured to be a part of the process to make Steve an Honorary Freeman and offered his congratulations to him.
- 3.8 Councillor Pissaridou stated that Steve had inspired her own daughter to overcome asthma, as he has, and run and was sure many others had been as well. She was pleased to be able to be a part of the process and wished him well and hoped that he would visit the city again.
- 3.9 Councillor A. Norman stated that when Steve was running the whole city used to get behind him, the expectation was that he would win and he never let the city down. She was proud to be here today to be able to show just how much the city felt and how proud it was of him, as she suspected he did not realise the impact he had had on the residents of the city.
- 3.10 Councillor G. Theobald stated that he was very proud to be in the presence of an Olympian and also noted that his own daughter had been inspired to take up running because of Steve. He was also pleased to see that the previous statue was being replaced and wished to thank those that had enabled the new one to be commissioned. He wanted to offer his congratulations and to say well done and thank you.
- 3.11 The Mayor noted the comments and noted that the new statue had been placed so that if a person ran to the Palace Pier and back, they would have covered exactly 800m. He stated that in accordance with the legislation, a motion to appoint Steve Ovetton as an Honorary Freeman had been moved and he would therefore put it to the vote, bearing in mind that two-thirds of those voting needed to be in favour of the motion for it to be carried.
- 3.12 The motion was carried unanimously.**
- 3.13 **RESOLVED:** That Mr. Steve Ovetton, OBE be appointed as an Honorary Freeman of Brighton and Hove.

- 3.14 The Mayor then invited Freeman Ovetto to come forward to collect a certificate in recognition of his appointment and to address the council.
- 3.15 Freeman Ovetto thanked the Mayor and the Members of the Council and stated that he was deeply honoured to have been recognised in such a way. He had not expected such an honour and stated that he was very proud to have come from Brighton. It had made him what he was, the chalk downs had given him the strength in his legs that he needed and he had enjoyed life just as Brighton did. It had been wonderful to meet up with his old teacher again, although he was glad she had been unable to make him into a swimmer. He wished to thank all those involved for the new statue, 'Steve Ovetto 2,' and hoped that it would be an inspiration to those marathon runners in the future as they reached the finish line. He hoped to be remembered for his sport and would always consider himself to be a Brightonian no matter where he was in the world and wanted to thank the council again for this honour.
- 3.16 The Mayor noted the comments and offered his congratulations to Freeman Ovetto on his appointment.

4. CLOSE OF MEETING

- 4.1 The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and invited them to join him at the unveiling ceremony on Madeira Drive and closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 5.25pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of