

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL COUNCIL

3.30pm 9 MAY 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Randall (Chair), Meadows (Deputy Chair), Barnett, Bennett, Bowden, Brown, Carden, Cobb, Cox, Davey, Deane, Farrow, Fitch, Gilbey, Hyde, A Kitcat, J Kitcat, Lepper, Marsh, Mears, Mitchell, Morgan, A Norman, K Norman, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon, Pissaridou, Robins, Shanks, Simson, Smith, Summers, C Theobald, G Theobald, Wealls, Wells, West and Wilson.

PART ONE

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 There were no declarations of interests.

2. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS.

2.1 The Mayor welcomed everyone the meeting which had been specially convened to consider the proposal to confer the honour of being a Freeman of the City on Roger French, OBE.

2.2 The Mayor stated that the meeting was being webcast and that he was happy for photos to be taken during the meeting.

3. HONORARY FREEMAN OF THE CITY

3.1 The Mayor stated that the Council was asked to consider the appointment of Roger French 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 pleasure and an honour to be able to nominate Roger French to be made an Honorary Freeman of Brighton and Hove. He stated that Roger as the Managing Director of the Bus Company a successful businessman and also a proven leader in regard to his stewardship of the Martlets, which was a well known local charity. Having championed the benefits of using buses in the city and the work of the charity he was an inspiration to all.

- 3.3 Councillor G. Theobald stated that as the Leader of the Conservative Group, he had great pleasure in being able to second the motion. It was a rare honour to receive the freedom of the city and something that reflected services to the city and he felt that there was no better recipient than Roger. Roger had come to the helm of Brighton Buses around 30 years ago and always answered any queries about the bus service usually within twenty-four hours. He had not always agreed with Roger about the bus service but found that he was always well prepared and courteous. His selfless work for the Martlets and other partnerships had to be recognised especially his excellent time keeping as Chair of the Local Strategic Partnership., which he was sure helped to encourage other business representatives to be involved and sit on the Partnership. He noted that he shared an interest with Roger in terms of trains and hoped that he would find time to enjoy various journeys across the country and Europe. To conclude he fully supported the proposal and was sure that Roger's services to the city were fully appreciated by all those who had come in contact with him.
- 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. She had become a councillor in 1993 which was the time the bus company took off and built on the loyalty of its customer base and began working in partnership with the council to deliver improvements such as dedicated bus lanes, and real time bus stop information. Roger had taken the company forward and delivered, Brighton and Hove did buses and did them well. He had also given up his time to the Martlets and other partnerships and they had benefitted from having his involvement over the years. She wished him well in his retirement and hoped that it would not mean that he was lost to public life as he had a great deal to offer.
- 3.5 Councillor Cox stated that he had worked with Roger in another life and had found him to be an honest broker and believed he held the respect of councillors, the public and leading business representatives. He was the public figure of the bus company in the city and he noted that he had even proved Baroness Thatcher wrong. She had previously remarked that a man beyond the age of 26 who found himself on a bus could count himself a failure and yet this was not the case as he had been persuaded by Roger to use the buses. He believed the city owed Roger a huge debt for bringing the bus service up to the standard it had reached today and he wished to thank him for his commitment.
- 3.6 Councillor A. Norman stated that she wished to pay her respects for Roger's work as the Chair for the last seven years of the Martlets Board of Trustees. The Board had faced a number of challenges over the years all which he had overseen in his calm manner and it was only now that the Board Members were coming to terms the fact that he would no longer be at the helm. He absolutely deserved this honour and she wished him well for the future.
- 3.7 Councillor Bowden stated that he wanted to praise Roger for all his work both at the Bus Company and with the various partnerships with the council that he had become involved with. He also noted that they had been on opposing sides during the debate over the possibility of an elected mayor for Brighton and that once that matter had been resolved, Roger was willing and able to be magnanimous in defeat; something that not everyone was able to do. He had been pleased to take Roger on a tour of the Keep recently and again appreciated just how Roger took things on board. Having mentioned

a concern about how people could travel to the site, he found Roger had raised it with colleagues and come up with a solution so that a bus service would be available to people wishing to get to the Keep. He hoped that Roger would enjoy his retirement and continue to be involved in some way in public life.

- 3.8 Councillor Davey stated that wherever he went, he found that there was one word associated with Roger, and that was success; people around the country would ask about the bus company and the operation in Brighton and Hove. He had seen Roger's passion for buses first hand and felt that he was leaving a legacy in people's hearts and this honour was a way of recognising all the work that Roger had put in place.
- 3.9 Councillor Peltzer Dunn stated that he wanted to draw attention to the people who were present today, the Lord Lieutenant, a past Sherriff and a Freeman, as well as councillors and members of the public. He believed that it showed the strength of feeling across the city for what Roger had done for the city and he wished to thank him personally for his work.
- 3.10 Councillor Fitch stated that he wished to thank Roger for his contribution to the city and to echo the comments of Councillor Norman in regard to his support and work for the Martlets, which as a local charity that was at the heart of all residents of the city had greatly benefitted from his stewardship.
- 3.11 The Mayor thanked everyone for their comments. He stated that in accordance with the legislation, a motion to appoint Roger French as an Honorary Freeman had been moved and seconded 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. Roger French, OBE be appointed as an Honorary Freeman of Brighton and Hove.
- 3.14 The Mayor then invited Freeman French to come forward to collect a certificate in recognition of his appointment and to address the council.
- 3.15 Freeman French thanked the Mayor and the Members of the Council and stated that he was genuinely honoured to have been recognised in such a way and was very conscious that it was due to finish at 4.00pm. He was absolutely speechless and was not sure that he could convey his heartfelt thanks for such an honour. Over the years he had been privileged to accept awards on behalf of the bus company and had also been given an OBE, but this honour was very special to him. His passion for buses had started at an early age and he had come to Brighton over 30 years ago and found a wonderful and diverse city with very special people who could work together for the benefit of the city. He also wanted to say how much he appreciated the role and work of councillors, who notwithstanding their political differences still found ways to come together for the benefit of the city as a whole. He wished to thank everyone concerned for enabling this meeting to take place and for conferring him with such an honour. He hoped that the new Chief Executive would take the city forward and lead the council through a difficult time and wanted to thank the current Leader, Councillor Kitcat and previous Leaders for their support and work with him and the bus company. He had

thoroughly enjoyed working in the city and being able to get involved with other partnerships and looked forward to seeing the city continuing to develop and prosper. He felt humbled and wanted to say thank you to everyone.

3.16 The Mayor noted the comments and offered his congratulations to Freeman French on his appointment.

4. CLOSE OF MEETING

4.1 The Mayor then closed the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 4.15pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of