

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council 18 May 2026

Appointment of Honorary Freemen

Accountable member:

Cllr Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Gareth Edmundson – Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected:

N/A

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

Council may confer the title of Honorary Freeman on persons who it considers have rendered eminent and distinguished service to the borough of Cheltenham.

Once agreed by Council, their appointments will be recognised as part of the Inauguration of the Mayor ceremony at the Town Hall on Monday 18 May 2026.

Recommendations: That Council:

Confers the title of Honorary Freeman on the following:

- Dave Bath
 - Steve Cotterill
 - Clare Seed
-

1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

There will be a small cost to the Council in the purchasing of robes and medals, plus the printing and framing of the certificates. These costs have been estimated to be in the region of £3,000. This cost will be covered within the budget for the service area.

Signed off by: Adele Taylor, Interim Director of Finance and Operations (S151),
adele.taylor@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

Full Council may confer the title of Honorary Freeman on persons who have, in the opinion of Council, rendered eminent service to the Borough.

In accordance with section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 the decision to confer the title must be passed at a meeting specially convened for the purpose and by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon.

An Honorary Freeman may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Authority may from time to time decide but, as such, has no right to attend meetings of Council, Cabinet or Committee other than as a member of the public, receive any of the allowances or other payments to which councillors are entitled.

Signed off by: Alison McKane, Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer
alison.mckane@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

None identified.

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

The recommendation contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

None identified. Please see attached appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment (Screening) document.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Not applicable

2 Background

2.1 The following people have been nominated for the position of Honorary

Freemen:

- Dave Bath;
 - Steve Cotterill;
 - Clare Seed.
- 2.2 Under the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, central government gives local councils the power to appoint Honorary Freeman. It allows a “relevant authority” (principal councils, parish and town councils, and charter trustees) to admit as Honorary Freeman persons of distinction, and persons who have rendered eminent services to the place or area of the authority,
- 2.3 The definition of “Eminent service” is left to the discretion of the Council. Previous honorary freemen nomination reports have described an Honorary Freeman as someone who has shown outstanding commitment to the local community and through their service, dedication and expertise have been able to enhance the standing of Cheltenham and its citizens in one or more of the following areas:
- Public service (including distinguished past service as a Councillor or officer of the Council);
 - Artistic and cultural endeavours;
 - Supporting business, economic growth and prosperity;
 - Charitable and community work;
 - Contributing improvements to the built and natural environment;
 - Promoting democratic engagement and civic life;
 - Supporting religious and spiritual life, and
 - Sporting achievement, or significant contribution to the development and promotion of sport.
- 2.4 Although nominations can be put forward by anyone, the Head of Paid Service nor any other council officer has any influence over the decision.
- 2.5 At least two thirds of councillors present and voting must support the formal resolution at a Council meeting specially convened for that purpose and usually held immediately following the Annual Council meeting in May.

3 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 The reasons for the nominations are as follows:

- 3.2 **Dave Bath** is a local resident living in the Moors area of the town who has given many years selfless service as a volunteer supporting his local community. He has provided volunteer maintenance work for Cheltenham Saracens Football Club for many years, organised a local food project to support his community through the pandemic and has been a leading figure in the plans to regenerate the local area through the St. Peters and the Moors Big Local project.
- 3.3 Dave is probably best known for his coordination of the Christmas selection box appeal and the Easter egg appeal donating seasonal treats to Cheltenham residents. Last Easter, his campaign saw over 1,600 easter eggs donated to local children and young people.
- 3.4 Dave is a true man of the people and, in recognition of his outstanding commitment to community work, was awarded the Cheltenham Medal of Honour in 2024.

- 3.5 Dave's response:

"About 14 years ago I was lucky to get a chance to start volunteering and give something back, starting with Cheltenham Saracens FC. I was then lucky to get a chance to volunteer with Brian Dix when he started the Cheltenham powerchair football and also to get a chance to volunteer with the St. Peters and the Moors Big Local project.

Then 5 years ago I was on Facebook asking if anyone could help me to get 20 selection boxes for a couple of local families. With the help of friends, that has now turned into the Cheltenham Easter and Christmas appeals which is something I never saw happening.

With the support of organisation like Cheltenham Round Table, Cheltenham Borough Council, the Cheltenham Trust plus lots of other local businesses and people, this Easter 1,630 Easter eggs were donated which shows the people of Cheltenham do care and are amazing"

- 3.6 **Steve Cotterill** was born and raised in Cheltenham and is the current manager of Cheltenham Town FC.
- 3.7 He first managed the club between February 1997 and May 2002, guiding it from the sixth tier of English football into the third tier and transforming the club

into a fully established professional club. During this period the Club won the FA Trophy in 1998 and in the following season secured promotion to the Football League. In total, Steve achieved three promotions in five years and secured his reputation as a club legend.

3.8 Following this success, Steve went on to manage nine other clubs before returning to Cheltenham Town Football Club in September 2025. At the time of his return, the club had lost nine of its first 12 matches, was rooted to the bottom of the table and faced the prospect of relegation back to non-league football. Since then, Steve has stabilised the club by securing a strong run of results that guaranteed its safety and has re-energised the relationship between the club and its supporters. Average matchday attendance has increased by 20% during his tenure.

3.9 Steve's response:

"What gives me the most pride is that youngsters can become professionals in their town, which wasn't possible when I was growing up.

We've had wonderful times: three promotions, wins at Wembley and at the Millennium Stadium.

I reached the Premier League as a player with Wimbledon and I have managed twice European Cup winners Nottingham Forest.

But being born and bred in Cheltenham made those days so special; the joy we brought to people stands out. We put ourselves on the footballing map.

I've given back to the community, making donations to Bettridge School and whatever I've done in my career, my heart has always been in Cheltenham."

3.10 Through her work with Public Hearts CIC, **Clare Seed** has led the development of a network of over 116 publicly accessible defibrillators in our town from a position where there were none in the town centre. This achievement represents the creation of a permanent, life-saving health infrastructure that will benefit the community for many years to come.

3.11 Clare has united businesses, community organisations, faith groups and volunteers in her endeavour to ensure that life-saving support is available to anyone who may need it. The documented use of these defibrillators in real

emergency situations demonstrates that lives have already been saved as a direct result of her determination, advocacy and persistence

Clare's response:

“Public Hearts Defib Campaign was created when in 2017, after I founded First Aid training providers, Tidal Training Direct Ltd teaching vital skills and confidence to act in a medical emergency. There were no publicly accessible defibrillators in the town centre, so I set about installing these lifesaving devices in our town so anyone can help someone on their worst day, improving out of hospital cardiac arrest survival rates, which sat at 3-7% at that time.

Six went in pre-Covid and from Autumn 2021, we installed one defib every fortnight for 4 years reaching Defib No 100 on 24 April 2025.

40% of our locations are charities, community groups, friends, clubs, societies and associations, who can't afford their own kit so we gladly do this for them as part of our Defib Family.

Since 2024 our work grew with Aid for Ukraine, where we now have four lifesaving defibrillators that are literally used daily. With 118 defibs now in and around our county, we're now including lifesaving bleed packs, and also delivering cardiac screening programmes for 14-35 year olds at The School House Cafe as a preventative measure.

Our impact is strong, with 70% of our defibs being accessed 236 times in the last 12 months, and two lives saved already this year.

It's a pleasure to be able to contribute in giving access for all to vital public health infrastructure and communities, where we can feel safe and thrive.”

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 None

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 The nominations have been discussed with group leaders

6 Key risks

6.1 There are two risks identified that are set out in appendix A:

- If the Council does not follow the defined procedure for appointing honorary freemen, then there is a risk of a challenge to the to the validity of the decision.
- If the Council appoints an Honorary Freeman, there is a risk that, should the honour need to be revoked, the absence of a clear revocation process could make removal difficult and result in reputational damage to the Council.

Report author:

Richard Gibson, Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the Council does not follow the defined procedure for appointing honorary freemen, then there is a risk of a challenge to the to the validity of the decision.	Gareth Edmundson	3	1	3	Reduce	By taking advice from the Council's Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer	Alison McKane	By 18 May 2026
	If the Council appoints an Honorary Freeman, there is a risk that, should the honour need to be revoked, the absence of a clear revocation process could make removal difficult and result in reputational damage to the Council.	Gareth Edmundson	3	1	3	Reduce	By considering the inclusion of a revocation process to be included within the constitution	Alison McKane	

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Richard Gibson	Service Area: Communities
Title: Head of communities, wellbeing & partnerships	Date of assessment: 24 April 2026
Signature:	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Other

If other, please specify: appointment of honorary freemen

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

appointment of honorary freemen

Is this new or existing?

Other

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:

To formally recognise individuals who have rendered eminent services to Cheltenham, going well beyond normal expectations of citizenship or professional duty. The honour exists to acknowledge service that is outstanding, sustained, and of clear benefit to the place or its people.

Objectives:

1. To celebrate civic values and public service
2. To publicly acknowledge contributions that enhance community life
3. To reinforce the relationship between the individual and the place
4. To provide a transparent and democratic process of recognition

Outcomes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public and lasting recognition of exceptional contribution 2. Strengthened civic pride and community identity 3. Inspiration for future service and volunteering
Benefits:	To recognise exceptional service, celebrate civic values, strengthen community pride, and create a lasting, public acknowledgment of individuals whose contribution has made a significant difference to the life and reputation of a place.

e. What are the expected impacts?	
Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	Yes
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	Positive
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
Given that this is a one-off decision regarding the appointment of honorary freemen, it has been agreed not to carry out a stage two assessment.	

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment	
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	

Please move on to Stage Two if required – see below – or delete if not required.