

CABINET

4 SEPTEMBER 2013

HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Joint report of the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services

1.0- Purpose of Report

To consider recommending Council formally to confer the Honorary Freedom of the City upon Monsieur Joël Batteux, Mayor of St Nazaire and Mr Niall Quinn MBE.

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 Monsieur Joël Batteux, and Mr Niall Quinn MBE
- (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 to be held on 11th November 2013.

3.0 Background

The Council has traditionally honoured notable citizens of Sunderland who have made significant contributions to the well being and community spirit of the City by conferring on them the Honorary Freedom of the City.

Members of the Council have now nominated two candidates for consideration:-

3.1 Monsieur Joël Batteux

Joël Batteux has been nominated in recognition of his longstanding commitment to the town twinning relationship between Sunderland and Saint-Nazaire throughout his time as Mayor and his significant work with British veterans.

Joël was born on 16th December 1943 in Vitré in Brittany. He went on to train as a chemical engineer before entering politics and being elected as a Member of the Saint-Nazaire Mairie (Town Council) on 13th March 1977. He quickly became Deputy Mayor the following year and was elected Mayor of Saint-Nazaire for the first time in 1983. He will stand down next year, having been re-elected for five successive terms (in 1989, 1995, 2001 and 2008).

During this time he has done much to transform his own town and the wider region. He is the President of the CARENE (a group of 10 local authorities within the Saint-Nazaire and Loire estuary region) and has been a member of the Regional Council for the Pays de la Loire region (one of 27 regions in France) since 1981, for which he held lead responsibility for Economic Development from 2004 to 2010. He has also been a longstanding ambassador for the town's international relationships and outward-looking approach. He was recognised for his exceptional service by the French state by being designated officer of the *Ordre National de Mérite* in 1992 and appointed a Knight of the Legion of Honour in 1999.

Joël's engagement with Sunderland predates his time as Mayor, dating back almost as long as the twinning relationship itself which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. He participated in one of the very first school exchange visits to Sunderland as a teenager in the late 1950's, spending a week at Bede School. Although at that time he did not dream that he might go on to become Mayor, and play such a significant role in supporting twinning, his commitment as Mayor is founded on the enthusiasm for international cooperation developed during that first visit to Sunderland.

Over the course of his five terms he has consistently ensured a lead within his Cabinet for international relations to support the development of the partnership. He has encouraged officers from a variety of service areas to take part in joint activity and to visit Sunderland as well as welcoming delegations from our city to Saint-Nazaire on numerous occasions to share good practice on a wide range of topics. He has also supported the foundation and ongoing development of Saint-Nazaire's Town Twinning Committee, which is starting to develop new joint activities with Sunderland partners this year.

As well as supporting the direct international partnership that Saint-Nazaire shares with Sunderland, Joël's commitment to Anglo-French relations has included significant work with British veterans, for which he was awarded the Order of the British Empire on behalf of Saint-Nazaire by the then-British Ambassador to France, Sir Peter Westmacott, in Paris in 2008. Sunderland's then Deputy Mayor Cllr Dennis Richardson was delighted to represent the city on this occasion to hear Sir Peter praise 'the exceptional relations that Saint-Nazaire has with Great Britain'. The Ambassador referred particularly to the annual remembrance ceremonies Saint-Nazaire hosts for more than

4,000 people who lost their lives as a result of the sinking of the RMS Lancastria following the Dunkirk evacuation, as well as those who took part in the daring commando raid on the port of Saint-Nazaire as part of Operation Chariot.

3.2 Mr Niall Quinn MBE

A former professional footballer, Niall Quinn MBE played for Arsenal, Manchester City and Sunderland in a glittering career lasting two decades.

Serving the Republic of Ireland with distinction, Niall amassed 21 goals in 92 appearances for his country and played starring roles in FIFA World Cup competitions in Italy in 1990 and Japan and South Korea in 2002.

He received widespread praise following his testimonial game between Sunderland and a Republic of Ireland XI in 2002, breaking with tradition to selflessly donate all proceeds from the game to charities including major children's hospitals in Dublin, Sunderland and India.

His contributions to football and charity earned him an honorary MBE in 2003.

After retiring as a player that year, Niall returned to the game and to Sunderland in 2006 when he brokered the deal which saw the Drumaville Consortium of Irish businessmen take control at the Stadium of Light. Appointed as chairman, his first season resulted in the club's promotion to the Barclays Premier League where it has remained and flourished since.

He attracted millions of pounds of investment to the club which also benefited the city's economy and he played a major role in Sunderland's 2018 World Cup bid

Hugely respected in the game, Niall went on to spearhead the growth of Sunderland AFC's global profile as its head of international development. He stood down from the club in 2012 to further his business interests and spend time with his family and is now a regular commentator on Sky Sports.

During his time in Sunderland Niall not only made a major contribution to its sporting life, but also became a real champion for the city and its people.

As well as helping fund the Niall Quinn Children's Centre at Sunderland Royal Hospital through his 2002 testimonial, he raised millions for charities across the city.

Under his chairmanship at the club, the SAFC Foundation went from strength to strength, working with thousands of young people and their families across the north east,

The annual Niall's Mile walking event lives on to this day, encouraging children to take part in exercise at the same time as raising funds for charity.

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, have contributed to the well being and community spirit of the City, it is considered appropriate to recommend the Council to confer the Freedom of the City upon the two nominees.

5.0 Reasons for Decision

The proposal will formally seal the relationships between the nominees and the City of Sunderland and will recognise their contributions to the well being and community spirit of the City. The proposal will also further strengthen the relationship between the City and its twin town St Nazaire.

6.0 Alternative Options

There are no alternative options submitted for consideration, as the conferring of honorary freedoms is considered to be appropriate in order to recognise the outstanding contributions made by the nominated individuals.

7.0 Background Papers

None.