

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023

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No.	Item	Decision
1.	The Mayor's Business	None
2.	Apologies	Alderman Boyle, Councillors Kane, Kennedy, McShane
3.	To Consider a Notice of Motion proposed by Alderman McAuley, seconded by Councillor Anderson	Support the Notice of Motion, as amended This Council awards the Freedom of the Borough to all health and care workers who have and continue to provide selfless, dedicated and high-quality life saving care to patients and family members in NHS facilities, community settings and households across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough.

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE ON
WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023 AT 7.00PM**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Callaghan (C)

Present : Alderman Callan (C), Coyle (C), Fielding (C), Knight-McQuillan (R), McAuley (C), McKillop (C), Scott (C), Stewart (C)

Councillors Anderson (C), C Archibald (C), Chivers (R), Holmes (R), Huggins (C), Kyle (R), Mairs (C), Jonathan McAuley (R), McCully (R), MA McKillop (R), McQuillan (R), Nicholl (R), Peacock (R), Schenning (C), Stirling (R), Storey (C), Wallace (R), Watson (R), Watton (C), Wilson (R), Wisener (C)

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive (C)
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

In attendance : C Thompson, ICT Operations Officer (C)
C Ballentine, ICT Operations Officer (C)

Press (1 No.) (R)

Key – C = Attended in the Chamber
R = Attended Remotely

The Mayor opened the meeting and extended a welcome to members of the press and public in attendance and provided guidance in relation to Council's Remote Meetings Protocol and audio recordings.

The Chief Executive undertook a roll call.

1. THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS

There was no Mayor's Business.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Boyle, Councillors Kane, Kennedy and McShane.

3. TO CONSIDER A NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY ALDERMAN MCAULEY, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ANDERSON

Citation previously circulated.

That this Council award the Freedom of the Borough to health and care workers who are providing selfless, dedicated and high-quality lifesaving care to patients

and family members in NHS facilities, community settings and households across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough during unprecedented times under the deadly threat of Covid-19.

The Mayor invited the Chief Executive to outline the background to the meaning of the Freedom of the Borough.

The Chief Executive outlined the Freedom of the Borough Ceremonial Protocol, citing from Annex B of Council's Standing Orders. The Chief Executive stated the Freedom of the Borough was the highest honour a local Council authority could confer on an individual or an organisation, a very important recognition of service to the area.

Alderman McAuley addressed Council:

*"Thank You Mayor,
This motion was submitted 3 ½ years ago, and to be honest it is embarrassing it has that it has taken that long.*

How or why, it has taken this long certainly needs questioned in order to ensure our processes are streamlined in the future but that is a piece of work for another day.

As for those individuals who lodged complaints about this Notice of Motion being heard back in April, which delayed it further claiming it would provide me with an electoral advantage – they must deal with different people than I do, because it certainly takes more than one Notice of Motion in 4 years to secure support in my area - I make no apologies for taking great satisfaction from the fact that some of those people are not here to listen to it tonight so maybe they should have focussed more on their own campaigns rather than mine.

My original motion was submitted at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, an issue that was and continues to be one of the most divisive topics ever. For that reason, I wish to slightly amend the original proposal so that is solely about expressing our heartfelt gratitude to the frontline workers within the NHS since its formation over 75 years ago, the last thing we want is for this to become a debate on the pandemic on the rights or wrongs as to the response to it".

Amendment

Proposed by Alderman McAuley

- This Council awards the Freedom of the Borough to all health and care workers who have and continue to provide selfless, dedicated and high-quality life saving care to patients and family members in NHS facilities, community settings and households across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough.

"It is right and fitting that as a Borough and a community we publicly recognise and value their contributions and is the highest award that the council can convey on an individual or corporate body".

Alderman McAuley referred to social media comments where it was stated Council would be better to give the NHS a pay rise, however, Alderman McAuley clarified this was the highest award that Council could bestow and fitting.

“In conferring the Freedom of the Borough, we will be reiterating our heartfelt gratitude to each and every member of staff for their service to our wellbeing and I hope that all members will support this proposal.

Finally, I would also request that members are involved in the selection of attendees to the ceremony in order to ensure that all sections of the workforce are represented and not just NHS Senior Staff and Management.

Like many people here we all know worthy individuals who have either served long years, or done significant things it is important we get the right people at the Ceremony and ensure a broad range right from Doctors, GP’s, domestics, clerical staff and paramedics. It is essential the platform is covered within the NHS and not just a handful of individuals at the top”.

The Mayor invited Councillor Anderson to address Council, as seconder to the amended Notice of Motion.

Councillor Anderson stated the award was very befitting for the people that work in the NHS. He stated that it was at times when us or a family member are ill, that it does hit home how vital a service the NHS provides, constant, 24/7. Councillor Anderson stated he was honoured to second the motion.

Councillor Wilson thanked the speakers for bringing a worthwhile motion to Council and concurred with the comments. Councillor Wilson stated the NHS was facing continual pressures, revered, and set as a gold standard across the world. Developing parts of the world try to emulate NHS, it was under incredible pressure and a victim of its own success, raising the living age of citizens into the age where they need more care. Councillor Wilson stated he worked alongside people in the NHS and it was a combined effort, to the staff at ground level, Nurses, Healthcare Assistants and Domiciliary, he advised it was a vocation. Councillor Wilson stated pay for staff was outside Council’s remit, however, as a Council it could bestow an accolade that was well deserved.

Councillor Mairs paid tribute to frontline workers in the Health and Social Care Services and stated that Council must also remember those who have worked tirelessly to care for some of the most vulnerable in society, the unpaid Carers. Councillor Mairs stated in Northern Ireland there were almost a quarter of a million people providing unpaid care for a sick or disabled family member or friend, that Council needed to recognise the great work done by Carers NI and Carers UK and other organisations working in communities to support those who provide care for a loved one. Councillor Mairs stated a resident had contact Councillor Kane who was unable to attend the meeting and, on his behalf, she outlined the stress of the personal circumstances faced by unpaid carer parents during the pandemic.

Councillor Peacock stated it was right that Council should come together to recognise and applaud its Health and Social Care workers, who worked tirelessly in the frontline during the largest public health crisis of a generation and concurred with Councillor Mairs comments regarding unpaid Carers. Councillor Peacock stated there were people across society in different roles who provided care and support to the most vulnerable. Health and Social Care staff who, at

great risk, looked after those isolating, seriously ill and the most vulnerable during a terrifying and challenging time and this was a chance to say thank you for the selfless courage, compassion and dedication during this time. Councillor Peacock, on behalf of her Party, reiterated gratitude to all those who follow a vocation in the health and social care system. Councillor Peacock referred to the challenges to achieve pay parity, and reiterated support in that endeavour.

Alderman Coyle on behalf of his Party stated support for the motion, the wide range and impact the NHS has. He stated a large organisation 76,000 employed within the NHS, that has changed over the years, as society has changed. Alderman Coyle advised he was a recipient of the care provided, that when you become a patient you realise the complex care from Consultants, Nurses, GP's, and those who maintain hospitals and their buildings. Alderman Coyle stated a personal example where he had been influenced by a cleaner during a period of isolation for which, he was grateful. Alderman Coyle referred to evolving specialist roles as society, mental health and physical health has changed, to keep up with the ever-changing treatment required.

Councillor Watton stated it should not have taken 3½ years for the Notice of Motion to come, advising he has family in the NHS and recognised the stress and strain during covid. Councillor Watton said he took on board Councillor Mairs' comments regarding unpaid Carers, and advised there could be a separate function to recognise those unpaid Carers. Councillor Watton agreed there should be a cross section of invited staff and supported the Notice of Motion.

Councillor McAuley spoke on behalf of himself and Councillor Kyle, stated support for the Notice of Motion and to be associated with the remarks of the previous speakers. Councillor McAuley stated the NHS was taken for granted by everyone.

The Chief Executive clarified the current decision of Council taken a number of years ago, where Freedom of the Borough nominations would not be dealt with on an as received basis, that they would be held until the last year of the Council and dealt with collectively. The Chief Executive advised nominations would be assessed in the last year of a Council term and the top three or four awarded. However, on reflection he advised it may be better to change to the penultimate year due to the Election.

The Chair put the Amended Notice of Motion to the Council.
The Mayor declared the Notice of Motion carried.

RESOLVED - This Council awards the Freedom of the Borough to all health and care workers who have and continue to provide selfless, dedicated and high-quality life saving care to patients and family members in NHS facilities, community settings and households across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough.

The Chief Executive advised a report on the proposed event format would be brought to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, including an outline of the suggested attendance.

The Mayor stated there was no discontent to this process.

This being all the business, The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.31pm.

Mayor

Unconfirmed