

**REPORT TO Executive**

**Date of Meeting: 11 September 2018**

**Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support**

**Title: FREEDOM OF THE CITY**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

**1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal to offer the Freedom of the City to
- :- Sir Steve Smith in recognition of his outstanding service to the City of Exeter, during his period as Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter;
  - :- Dr Todd Gray in recognition of his passionate interest in Exeter's historic buildings and his concern for their continued preservation.

**2. Recommendations:**

- 2.1 That in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, an Extraordinary meeting of the Council be arranged, on the rising of the Ordinary meeting of the Council on 16 October 2018, to consider granting the Freedom of the City to Sir Steve Smith and Dr Todd Gray.

**3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

- 3.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, gives Councils the power to grant "Freedom of the City" to any individual who it feels has given eminent service to the City.
- 3.2 To this end, an Extraordinary meeting of the full Council must be convened to specifically consider this matter, with two thirds of those present, voting in favour.
- 3.3 If the recommendation contained in this report is accepted by The Executive and subsequently adopted by full Council, an Extraordinary meeting of the Council will therefore be organised immediately after the ordinary meeting of the Council scheduled for 16 October 2018, when Members will be asked to consider granting the Freedom of the City to Sir Steve Smith and Dr Todd Gray.
- 3.4 Members are reminded of the following four criteria against which nominations for Freeman of the City are considered:-
- For those who have extraordinarily served the community over a number of years (minimum of 20 years) in a voluntary or professional capacity;
  - For those who have achieved national, international or world recognition for excellence in their particular field of expertise (be it business, entrepreneurial, sport, or any other area);
  - For those who have promoted Exeter during their career so as to significantly raise the profile of the City on a national, international or world basis;

- For those who have via a particularly extraordinary act, or series of acts, put the safety or well being of themselves secondary to those of others.

3.5 The following nomination has been received in respect of **Sir Steve Smith**:-

*“Over the 15 years since he became Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter, the university has not only grown considerably, bringing financial benefits to the City, but more importantly has become one of the top universities in this country and indeed in the world. It is a leading member of the Russell Group, committed to maintaining the very best research. And outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector. This has resulted in Exeter attracting students from all over the world, a positive benefit to the City. The medical school, established during his Vice Chancellorship, is recognised as one of the best in the UK. He also works closely with other important establishments to promote a great city.”*

As such, it meets several of the agreed criteria against which such nominations should be assessed, and as such is recommended for approval.

3.6 In response to this nomination, Sir Steve has stated:-

*“It would mean a lot to me to receive this honour but much more importantly I think it would mean a lot to my colleagues at the university. This is because over the last 16 years a large number of staff in the university and the City Council have spent a lot of time building a supportive and productive relationship between the two organisations. The incredible success of the city in recent years owes a lot to a large number of people, but a central role has been played by the way the university and City Council have worked together on education, on the economy, on arts and culture, and on planning. The results have benefited the population of Exeter at a time when many parts of the UK have suffered through austerity. The City Council, working with key partners including the university, have done much to alleviate those problems here. I have been incredibly pleased to see the development of the city during my time here and have been both proud and very happy to be a small part of that process. This honour would be gone clearest possible indication of the ways in which by working together the City Council and the university have achieved so much for the city and the region. I accept with humility and warmth.”*

3.7 The following nomination has been received in respect of **Dr Todd Gray**:-

1. *Dr Todd Gray has extraordinarily served the community over more than 20 years in both a voluntary and professional capacity*

*He is the person to whom everybody turns if any information on the history of Exeter is needed. As an American who chose to settle in Exeter twenty-eight years ago and became a British citizen, he has spent those years researching the history of Exeter and Devon and publishing countless books using original material he has found in this county's and indeed the country's archives and repositories. He has over the years opened his home and garden to representatives of all the local history societies to bring them together. He was the person television and radio companies contacted when the fire broke out in Cathedral Yard as it was his knowledge of Exeter's historic buildings they knew they could rely on.*

2. *Dr Todd Gray has achieved national and international recognition for excellence in his particular field of expertise.*

*Dr Gray has achieved national and international recognition for his publishing and lecturing on historical matters. His Mint Press has published 37 of his own books and 21 by other leading academics, using Exeter companies like Short Run Press and Topics Design. Professor Mark Stoyle's book "Witchcraft in Exeter 1558-1660" was a recent Mint Press publication and was accompanied by a fully booked seminar at the Guildhall in November 2017. Four of Dr Gray's books were awarded "Devon Book of the Year" by the Devon Historical Society.*

*His latest book chronicling the history of over forty buildings in the vicinity of those affected by the Cathedral Yard fire demonstrates his continuing deep concern for Exeter's heritage, and its preservation. The book has sold over 1,000 copies in the five months since its launch on 20 November 2017 which clearly shows the level of interest of Exeter people (and those who have lived in or known Exeter in the past) in the history of these historic buildings.*

*As quoted from the Mint Press website "Dr Gray is Chairman of the Devon & Cornwall Record Society, the past President of the Devon Family History Society and a past Chairman of the Devonshire Association and Friends of Devon's Archives. He is a committee member of the Devon History Society and Devon & Cornwall Notes and Queries. Dr Gray is also a member of the Devon Buildings Group. He is actively involved in supporting many local history groups and charities." He is an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Exeter and has served on the Board of Trustees of the South West Heritage Trust. He is also a member of the Exeter Local History Society.*

*Dr Gray has also written questions for the BBC2 programme Mastermind and from 2004-2006 wrote a weekly column for the Express and Echo called History Matters.*

3. *Dr Todd Gray has promoted Exeter during his career so as to raise significantly the profile of the City on a national and international basis.*

*Dr Gray has actively promoted Exeter's profile on many occasion with exhibitions held in the Guildhall – one example being the time he was instrumental in helping gain permission to bring the Exeter Salt to the city for Exeter's citizens to enjoy.*

*He gave a lecture (morning and afternoon) in the Guildhall on Thursday 4 May 2017 to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Exeter Blitz at which the Lord Mayor and civic dignitaries were present.*

*A few years ago, when the future of the Devon Record Office was threatened because of cutbacks, Dr Gray was the prime mover in a campaign to mobilise all interested parties to work to save it. He exploited his considerable academic and other contacts across the world to use their voices to protest against a likely closure of a research facility which is second to none, and is a repository of priceless original historical records. Closure would have been catastrophic to academics, to those researching family and local history and to Devon's Heritage.*

*The campaign took up months of Dr Gray's unpaid time and the fact that it was eventually agreed that it should be preserved is a testament to his tireless efforts.*

As a consequence he was awarded an MBE in 2014 for his services to the preservation of Devon's heritage.

Dr Gray was also responsible for organising the events at the Barnfield Theatre the week after the Cathedral Yard fire, bringing together archaeologists and building specialists to talk to the county's residents about the buildings affected, The events held on the Saturday and Monday were so well attended that many were turned away as the theatre was full.

His continued concern for the welfare of the buildings affected by the fire in Cathedral Yard was demonstrated by his organisation of a day of commemorative talks in the Guildhall on 20 November 2017, a year after the fire.

Dr Gray's passion for Exeter and its buildings is further demonstrated by his organisations of a series of lunchtimes lectures and conferences earlier this year where ne was able to bring together Exeter historians to speak on various topics.

4. Dr Todd Gray, via a particularly extraordinary act or series of acts, put the safety of wellbeing of himself secondary to those of others.

During the course of the fire in Cathedral Yard, Dr Gray was constantly on the scene in Exeter and used an opportunity to go up in the cherry picker to observe for himself the fire's devastation. As a result of this, he was personally able to make the Chief Fire Officer aware that the Fire Brigade should also be paying attention to the considerably older buildings in the High Street at the rear of the Royal Clarence. Prior to this the focus had been mainly on the hotel without the Fire Brigade realising that Laura Ashley and Costa Coffee were potentially greater historical losses than the Royal Clarence. Dr Gray visited Costa Coffee with Fire Brigade personnel and witnessed a flare up in the building. Had those important buildings not been saved, the fire might have spread along the High Street and could well have reached the Guildhall.

- 3.8 In response to this nomination, Dr Gray has stated:-

*"I feel not just overwhelmed but am stunned at being given this honour - who could anticipate being included in a group of individuals such as Admiral Nelson and the Duke of Wellington? Over the last thirty years I have been fortunate in working alongside great historians such as Mark Stoye, Julia Crick and John Allan and feel I share this honour with them and the many others who on a daily basis help explain the rich history of this extraordinary city which we all love and cherish."*

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.**

- 4.1 Other than a small cost in preparing a suitable ceremonial scroll and hosting a small reception, there are no resource implications.

#### **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications contained within this report, on the basis that the cost of a ceremonial scroll and reception will be met from approved budgets.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, gives Councils the power to grant "Freedom of the City" to any individual who it feels has given eminent service to the City.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

## **8. Report details:**

- 8.1 The Council is asked to consider bestowing the honour of Freedom of the City to

- :- Sir Steve Smith in recognition of his outstanding service to the City of Exeter, during his period as Vice Chancellor of the University of Exeter;
- :- Dr Todd Gray in recognition of his passionate interest in Exeter's historic buildings and his concern for their continued preservation

- 8.2 Members are reminded that the way in which such nominations are considered by the Council was changed earlier this year (minute number 46 of the Executive of 10 April 2018 refers) whereby an Assessment Panel would sit to consider the written submissions received.

- 8.3 This Panel was to comprise of:-

- The Leader of the Council (or nominee)
- The Leader(s) of other political groups on the Council (or nominee(s))
- The Chief Executive & Growth Director (or nominee from the Strategic Management Board) The Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support
- An external representative (Professor Brian Kirby has taken up this role)

- 8.4. The Panel met in August 2018, to consider these two nominations, and felt satisfied that both met the necessary criteria to forward the nominations to the Executive for acceptance and onward recommendation to an Extraordinary Council meeting, which, it should be noted, that legislation dictates should be convened specifically for this purpose. Statute also dictates that 2/3rds of those attending the Council meeting must vote in favour of the decision.

## **9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 9.1 This decision will help promote the City as a regional capital and one which supports those who support and promote the City as such.

## **10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 10.1 There are no risks associated with the proposals.

**11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

11.1 None applicable with this decision

**12. Are there any other options?**

12.1 The Council could decide not to make the award, although it is felt that this would be against the Council's approved criteria.

**John Street**  
**Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support**

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)  
Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Contact for enquires:  
Democratic Services (Committees)  
Room 2.3  
01392 265275