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# **City of Leicester Award**

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Decision to be taken by: Council

Date of meeting: 18 September 2025

Lead director/officer: Kamal Adatia, City Barrister &  
Head of Standards

### **Useful information**

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Kalvaran Sandhu
- Author contact details: Kalvaran.Sandhu@leicester.gov.uk
- Report version number: 0.1

## **1. Summary**

To consider the conferment of the City of Leicester award to the following:

- Elvy Morton
- Professor Sir Nilesh Samani

## **2. Recommended decision**

That the City Council:

- Confirm the conferment of the City of Leicester Award to the Elvy Morton and Professor Sir Nilesh Samani in recognition of both excellence in serving the city of Leicester and for the wider recognition brought to the city through their work and endeavours.

## **3. Report**

### **3.1 City of Leicester award purpose and criteria**

The City of Leicester award aims to provide an opportunity for individuals to be honoured for outstanding achievements which have a positive and wide-reaching impact on the City of Leicester. Recipients of the City of Leicester award should have demonstrated outstanding performance in their given field which has been a source of inspiration to the residents of the city.

This award is designed to complement the other civic awards which include the Honoured Citizen Award Scheme which has been in existence for around 20 years, and which is aimed at recognising acts of bravery, helping others and improving the community at a more local level, and Honorary Freedom of the City which is the highest honour that the City Council can bestow. This latter award is only given rarely and is governed by the provisions of Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, and the local award has certain conditions including a requirement that the nominee where this is an individual, has been on the electoral role for 5 years out of the last 20 years.

The City of Leicester award recognises and acknowledges an individual's outstanding performance in their given field which has both inspired the city's residents and has positively impacted on the City of Leicester by delivering clear and demonstrable benefits to the educational, cultural, civic or economic life of the city as a whole and / or who has gained the city wider recognition. Recipients will be considered on the following basis:

- their achievements have resulted in a positive impact on the local community and its residents and / or has delivered a lasting benefit to Leicester;
- their achievements will result in educational, cultural, civic or economic improvement and may be recognised at a wider level throughout the city, county or nationally;
- the nominee does not need to be a resident of the City, but should have a close association to Leicester through their work or significant voluntary contribution;
- the nominee would not be eligible for, or have previously been awarded, Freedom of the City;
- the nominee should not be a serving politician or currently hold a political role within the City; and
- awards can be awarded posthumously, where a recipient's achievements are acknowledged subsequent to their death (up to a period of 5 years).

### **3.2 Proposed recipients for City of Leicester Awards 2025**

The recipients being proposed to Council for the City of Leicester Awards are as follows:

- Elvy Morton
- Professor Sir Nilesh Samani

### **3.3 Elvy Morton**

Elvy Morton's journey began when she arrived in England at just 23 years old, part of the Windrush generation that helped rebuild post-war Britain. But her contributions didn't stop at survival or assimilation, she thrived, uplifted others, and made an indelible mark on British society.

One of her most trailblazing achievements was her role in diversifying the representation of children in mainstream retail. It was her advocacy and persistence that led Lewis' to introduce Black dolls to their stores. At a time when representation was almost non-existent, she fought to ensure that young Black girls could see themselves reflected in the toys they played with. Her campaign wasn't just about dolls, it was about dignity, identity, and belonging. Through this simple but powerful change, she helped reshape how Black children were seen in British culture.

Recognising the importance of cultural pride and community cohesion, she went on to found the Leicester Caribbean Carnival, one of the city's most vibrant and inclusive events. Inspired by Caribbean traditions but deeply rooted in Leicester's multicultural spirit, the carnival gave a voice and a stage to those who had been historically silenced. It became more than just a celebration; it was a declaration that Black culture is an essential and cherished part of the British story.

Throughout her life, Mrs Morton has been a tireless champion for the Black community in Leicester. Whether mentoring young people, organising cultural events, or quietly helping families in need, her commitment has never wavered. She has bridged generations—preserving the heritage of those who came before her while empowering those who come after. She has been a source of wisdom, resilience, and inspiration to all who have crossed her path.

### **3.4 Professor Sir Nilesh Samani**

Professor Samani was born in Kenya and moved to the UK with family in 1971 and settled in Leicester. He was part of the first intake of medical students in the new Leicester Medical School in 1975 and graduated in 1981 with distinction.

He was appointed as consultant cardiologist to the Cardiac Centre at Glenfield Hospital, Leicester in 1993 and helped to establish its reputation as a major cardiac centre providing high quality cardiac care to the people of Leicestershire and beyond. He was then appointed as Professor of Cardiology at the University of Leicester in 1997 and awarded a prestigious personal British Heart Foundation Chair in Cardiology in 2003. He has personally provided care to a large number of patients over the last 32 years and trained countless number of doctors.

Professor Samani served as Head of Department of Cardiovascular Sciences at the University of Leicester between 2003-2016 and Director of the Leicester NIHR Biomedical Research Unit in Cardiovascular Disease 2009-2016. In these roles, established Leicester as a major internationally recognised centre for research into cardiovascular diseases.

He has since served as Medical Director of the British Heart Foundation (BHF) from 2016-2023. The BHF is the main funder of research in heart and circulatory diseases in the UK (and one of the largest in the world). funding over £100 million of new research each year. It also acts as the champion and advocate for patients suffering with cardiovascular diseases. The Medical Director of the BHF oversees all its research funding and medical activities and plays a key national role in the fight against heart disease.

He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science by the University of Leicester in 2014 and an Honorary Doctorate of Medicine by the University of Edinburgh in 2025 and awarded the highest honours from the NHS Platinum Clinical Excellence Award, 2010, the British Cardiovascular Society (Mackenzie Medal, 2020), the European Society of Cardiology (Gold Medal, 2021), the Japan Vascular Disease Research Foundation (Okamoto Award).

Professor Samani was awarded a Knighthood for Services to Medicine and Medical Research in New Year's Honours List 2015, thus becoming the first Asian to be knighted in the city.

He was also appointed as Deputy Lieutenant of Leicestershire in 2008.

#### **Conferment of City of Leicester Award**

The significant contributions Elvy Morton and Professor Sir Nilesh Samani have made to the city through their achievements have brought benefits to the city and its communities as well as wider national and international recognition. They each rightly deserve to be recognised for this through the conferment of the City of Leicester Award.

## **4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

*Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance*  
*8<sup>th</sup> September 2025*

### **4.2 Legal implications**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this proposal. This is a non-statutory gesture of recognition that confers no specific rights or obligations and the Council has the general competence to make it.

*Kamal Adatia, City Barrister, Ext 37 1401*  
*9<sup>th</sup> September 2025*

### **4.3 Equalities implications**

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities (including the local authority and schools), have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a statutory duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

While this report doesn't directly address specific equality issues, the award recipients have all contributed positively to fostering good relations and advancing equality of opportunity among people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

*Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148*  
*9 September 2025*

### **4.4 Climate Emergency implications**

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report.

*Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246*  
*8 September 2025*

## **5. Background information and other papers:**

None