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# Honorary Freedom of the City

Decision to be taken by: Council

Date of meeting: 23 February 2022

Lead director/officer: Miranda Cannon, Director of  
Delivery, Communications and Political Governance

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Miranda Cannon
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- Report version number: 0.1

### 1. Summary

To consider conferment of Honorary Freedom of the City of Leicester to Leicester City Football Club.

### 2. Recommended decision

That the City Council under and by virtue of the provisions of Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 confers on Leicester City Football Club the Honorary Freedom of the City of Leicester and causes them to be admitted as Honorary Freeman of said City in recognition of the honour and distinction brought to the city by their sporting achievements and in appreciation of their commitment to community including the development and role of sport within the city's communities.

### 3. Report

#### 3.1 Honorary Freedom Criteria and process

Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the City Council to confer the Honorary Freedom of the City persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the city. The Act requires that any appointment be approved by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting of the Council specially convened for the purpose.

The process adopted by the City Council where it relates to organisations, additionally states that:

- For an organisation to be granted freedom of the city they must have a well-established and evidenced connection to the city.
- The honour will only be given to an individual or organisation who the citizens of Leicester would recognise as deserving of such an honour and whose contribution would stand out from the contributions of most other individuals / organisations for example being recognised as inspirational in their field.
- The individual / organisation must have made a significant contribution to the City either through improvement in the well-being of a significant proportion of city residents or in raising the reputation and profile of the city.

#### 3.2 Leicester City Football Club history and achievements

Originally named Fosse after The Fosse Way, the team played their first match on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1884 on a private field off Fosse Road South, winning 5-0 over Syston. Between 1884 and 1887, their first regular venue was Victoria Park. Fosse defeated Coalville in the Leicestershire County Cup final in Loughborough in 1890 and, during the

following season, were introduced to the FA Cup for the first-ever time. In October of 1891, an opportunity arose to base the Club on Filbert Street at a venue which was then known to the public as the Walnut Street Ground. Following months of lobbying, a major moment in the Club's history arrived in 1894 as an AGM granted Fosse with enough votes to earn election to the recently-formed Second Division within the Football League pyramid. After wearing an iconic black strip with a sky-blue sash and long white trousers, by the time of their inaugural Football League fixture, they had switched to chocolate brown and blue halves before, in 1903, electing to wear the blue and white colours recognisable today.

After more than one hundred years at Filbert Street the club moved to a new stadium, King Power Stadium in 2002. In 2010, the Club was taken over by a Thai-led consortium called Asian Football Investments, which was fronted by King Power's Khun Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, who became Chairman in 2011. His son Khun Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha was one of two Vice-Chairmen. The Srivaddhanaprabha family are now sole owners of the Club. The new owners have invested heavily in Leicester City Football Club and in support for the wider city. Sadly, on Saturday 27 October 2018, Club Chairman, Khun Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, was killed in a helicopter accident, alongside four others, outside King Power Stadium. His son Khun Aiyawatt vowed to continue his father's legacy.

Leicester City have won the second-tier title a record seven times, won the League Cup three times, sealed the FA Community Shield twice, and competed in six European campaigns, most notably in the 2016/17 UEFA Champions League, when the Club reached the quarter-finals. Undoubtedly their crowning achievement was to win the Premier League title in 2015/16, despite pre-season odds of 5,000/1 for them to achieve the feat. Then in May 2021, they achieved the Club's first FA Cup success after beating Stoke City, Brentford, Brighton & Hove Albion, Manchester United and Southampton in earlier rounds, the Foxes beat Chelsea in the final at Wembley Stadium on 15 May, 2021. It meant Leicester City had now won every major honour in English football - the Premier League, the FA Cup and the League Cup. A second success in the FA Community Shield, formerly the FA Charity Shield, was also secured in August 2021, courtesy of a 1-0 win over Manchester City at Wembley.

The Club has also enjoyed success in recent years with the Women's team. Leicester City Women Football Club was founded in 2004 initially as an independent club but were acquired in 2020 by King Power. On 4 April 2021, the club won the Women's Championship sealing promotion to the FA Women's Super League in the process.

Leicester City Football Club also play a key role in supporting the community. The Foxes Foundation formed in 2011/12 and renamed The Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha Foundation in November 2018 in honour of Leicester City's late Chairman, Khun Vichai, has provided significant support for local charities. The money raised over the years has made a real impact locally, including supporting the renovation of Leicester Royal Infirmary's Children's Outpatient Ward, funding for life-saving equipment for the Children's Intensive Care Unit and for installation of defibrillators within the community, and support for charities such as the city's LOROS hospice.

Alongside the Foundation, Leicester City Football Club Community Trust (Leicester City in the Community) aims to use football to inspire individuals to reach their full potential. The Trust runs a range of programmes focusing on education, community engagement and health and wellbeing. Their work encompasses programmes which support refugees and

asylum seekers in the city, support for grassroots football, activities which encourage participation in sport across all ages including a focus on physical and mental health and wellbeing, and programmes which support young people including those living in care and those who are at risk of being disengaged. The Trust has a strong inclusive ethos and very much recognises both the diversity of the city and the challenges our communities face. The programmes that Leicester City in the Community deliver seek to take account of and reach out to all communities including those who are likely to be more vulnerable and disengaged.

### **3.3 Conferment of Honorary Freedom to Leicester City Football Club**

The significant contribution of Leicester City Football Club to the city of Leicester is clearly demonstrated above, both in terms of their role in raising the reputation and profile of the city through their sporting achievements and in appreciation of their commitment to community including the development and role of sport within the city's communities. The Club has a long history within the city and rightly deserve to be recognised through the conferment of Honorary Freedom by Leicester City Council.

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

### 4.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

*Martin Judson, Head of Finance, Ext 37 4101*

### 4.2 Legal implications

The conferment of 'Honorary' Freedom of the City is distinct to the granting of Freedom by 'entitlement' under section 248 Local Government Act 1972. The gesture is a symbolic one, and brings with it no specific entitlements or obligations. The legal definition of "persons" is also given a broad interpretation in law, and includes unincorporated bodies, such as a Members Club. The honour can therefore be conferred upon the club. In law, an unincorporated association (such as a member's club) does not have a distinct legal identity from those of its constituent Members. The 'body' therefore comprises its members.

*Kamal Adatia, City Barrister, Ext 37 1401*

### 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.

There are no direct equalities implication arising from the report, but awarding Leicester City Football Club the Honorary Freedom of the City of Leicester would be positive for supporting the work they have done to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't, as described in the report.

*Kalvaran Sandhu, Equalities Manager, Ext 37 6344*

#### 4.4 Climate Emergency implications

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

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

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

None