



Chelmsford City Council

13 May 2026

Application to confer honorary title of Freeman of City

Report by: Leader of the Council

Officer contacts:

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Purpose

To consider an application by Cllr Massey to confer the honorary title of Freeman of the City upon Cllr Whitehead.

Recommendation:

That Full Council agrees to confer upon Cllr Roy Whitehead the honorary title of Freeman of the City.

.1. Background

1.1 An application has been received by Cllr Massey for the honorary title of Freeman of the City be conferred upon Cllr Whitehead. The Council has an existing procedure for considering such applications.

1.2 In accordance with that procedure the application was initially considered by the Mayoral Working Group confidentially to determine if the application had merit before any formal consideration by Full Council.

1.3 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that “persons of distinction, who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area” can be granted Freedom of the City.

1.4 This power is exercised by resolution of Full Council and Section 249(8) provides this must be passed: -

- a) at a meeting specially convened for the purpose and where notice of this object is given
- b) by not less than 2/3rds of the members of the authority who vote on it.

Whilst this must be a separate meeting called specifically for the purpose such applications can be dealt with by calling an extraordinary council meeting (ECM) for immediately after a scheduled Full Council meeting.

1.5 The Mayoral Working Group agreed that this application met the relevant legal and procedural requirements and recommends to Full Council that it should be approved.

Appendices

Appendix 1– Application to confer honorary freeman title upon Cllr Whitehead

Background Papers

None

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides a legal power for Full Council to take this decision, and the requirements are set out in the report. Upon local government reorganisation honorary titles (e.g. Freeman/Aldermen) are retained under regulations and would transfer into the new Mid Essex Unitary Council. This is by virtue of Reg 30 of the Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regs 2018 (SI 2018/1128). Part 5 of the Council’s constitution provides that councillors have a dispensation in relation to items of business concerning ceremonial honours and accordingly Cllr Whitehead is entitled to remain and fully participate in this item of business.

Financial: Any additional costs relating to the presentation of a scroll & badge can be provided for within the existing budgets. There is specific legal power for the council to incur such costs in Section 249(9) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees:

Mayoral working Group

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Council procedure relating to honorary titles

To: Mayoral Working Group
Chelmsford City Council

From: Cllr. Bob Massey

16th December 2025

Subject: Proposal to make Cllr. Roy Whitehead an Honorary Freeman of the City

I wish to formally propose that Cllr. Roy Whitehead be made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Chelmsford. Roy has made a considerable contribution to the City, the City Council, and the City's residents:

- Roy has served residents on South Hanningfield Parish Council since 1990, many of those years as chairman.
- He has also served those residents as Borough and City Councillor since 1999.
- Roy was Leader of the council from 2003 through to 2019 and has led the Council's Conservative Group since 2003.
- He has been instrumental in encouraging businesses to come to Chelmsford, not least John Lewis, still their only outlet in Essex.
- And, of course, Roy was a driver of Chelmsford's successful bid for city status.
- He was a founder member of the Chelmsford Twinning Partnership, fostering social, cultural, and business links between Annonay, Backnang, and Chelmsford. He is still active within the Twinning Partnership.

Chelmsford has only appointed one Freeman since it attained city status thirteen years ago. We have the opportunity to appoint at least one more before Local Government Reorganisation kicks in.

Sincerely,

Cllr. Bob Massey

Representing the residents of Chetwood & Collingwood Ward, South Woodham Ferrers