
Report on the “Freedom of the City of Dublin”

Background:

The City Council may confer the Freedom of the City under Section 74 of the Local Government Act, 2001 (as amended by the Reform of Local Government Act 2014). The honorary freedom of the city is the highest award in the city’s gift and is conferred very rarely. The freedom is purely honorary with no financial or other benefits accruing to the recipients. Prior to the Local Government Act, 2001, Dublin Corporation (as it was then called) could bestow that honour under the provisions of the Municipal Privileges (Ireland) Act, 1876 and later under the Local Government Act, 1991.

Legislation:

Section 74. of the Local Government Act 2001 -;

(1) (a) A local authority may confer a civic honour on a distinguished person in such manner as it may determine, including the admission of the person to the honorary freedom of its administrative area, and may establish and maintain a roll or other record in which to enter the names of persons so honoured.

(b) The Cathaoirleach may, without prejudice to *paragraph (a)*, propose a person for a civic honour under this section.

(2) Any roll or other record of civic honour established and maintained by a local authority before the commencement of this section shall continue as if established and maintained under this section.

(3) A decision of a local authority to confer the Freedom of City on a person is a reserved function.

Standing Orders Working Group:

The Standing Orders Working Group comprising of Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy, Cllr. Dermot Lacey, Cllr. Anne Feeney and Cllr. Micheal MacDonncha met on 14th December 2022 to discuss the process and procedures surrounding nominations for the Freedom of the City. Outlined below are the recommendations of the Working Group for consideration of the Protocol Committee. If agreed by the Protocol Committee this policy will be incorporated into Standing Orders.

Process for Nominations:

- 1) All requests to consider an individual for the Honour of the Freedom of the City should be forwarded to the Lord Mayor’s Office.

- 2) It is open to all Members to put forward a nomination for consideration by the Lord Mayor. This should be done by direct application to the Lord Mayor rather than by motion to any Committee of Council including full Council. The final decision to nominate an individual rests with the Lord Mayor.
- 3) The Lord Mayor will consider all requests and if he/she wishes to bring forward a nomination it will be brought to the Group Leaders and Protocol Committee for consultation and consideration.
- 4) Following such consultation the Lord Mayor is the final arbiter in deciding if a nomination is brought to the full City Council.
- 5) Individuals considered for the award should have contributed significantly to the life of Dublin City or be national or international figures who have made important contributions to the world of arts, sciences, politics, sports and public service. Contentious individuals and those that risk reputational damage to the City Council should not be considered.
- 6) To preserve the value and significance of the Freedom of the City it should be preserved for truly exceptional individuals and should not be considered an annual event.
- 7) As the bestowing of the Honour of the Freedom of the City is a Reserved Function the nomination will be put before the full City Council and will require a minimum two thirds majority to agree the resolution.

Procedures for Deletions from the Roll of Honour of Dublin City:

The current legislation makes no reference to the deletion of a name from the roll of honour or the reversal of a resolution to bestow the freedom of an administrative area. Therefore, the ordinary statutory powers granted to the Members of the City Council to make, revoke or amend resolutions with regard to all of their reserved functions enables them to delete names from the Roll of Honorary Freedom of Dublin City if they so wish. Accordingly set out hereunder are two sample resolutions which Members may use depending on the particular circumstances :

Scenario 1 – Members wish to revoke a resolution conferring the Freedom of the City and remove a name from the Roll of Honorary Freedom

“That Dublin City Council hereby resolves to rescind its decision of the dd/mm/yy bestowing the Freedom of the City on xxxx and instructs the Chief Executive to remove the name of xxxx from the Roll of Honorary Freedom”

Scenario 2 – Members wish to consider a request by a recipient of the Freedom of the City to have his/her name removed from the Roll of Honorary Freedom

“That Dublin City Council, having considered a request from xxxx, on whom the Freedom of the City was bestowed by resolution on the dd/mm/yy, hereby resolves to rescind its decision of that date and instructs the Chief Executive to remove the name of xxxx from the Roll of Honorary Freedom in accordance with his/her wish”

Ruth Dowling
Senior Executive Officer
14th December 2022