

Meeting: General Purposes Committee
Date: 27th November 2023
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: Freedom of the City – Kevin Andrew Maher

Executive Director: Claire Shuter – (Executive Director of Strategy and Change)
Report Author: Robert Harris – Principal Democratic Services Officer
Executive Councillor: Councillor Cox (Leader of the Council)

1. Executive Summary

For the General Purposes Committee to consider a proposal by Anna Firth MP, supported by the Group Leaders, to confer the Freedom of the City of Southend-on-Sea on Mr Kevin Andrew Maher.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That, pursuant to Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council be recommended to confer the Freedom of the City of Southend-on-Sea on Mr Kevin Andrew Maher in recognition of the eminent and outstanding services he has rendered to the City and Southend United Football Club.

2.2 That Kevin Andrew Maher be presented with a ceremonial scroll at a Special Council meeting to be arranged.

3. Background

3.1 S.249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council the power to confer the title of Honorary Freeman on a person of distinction and a person who in the opinion of the local authority has rendered eminent services to the City. A special Council meeting must be convened for this purpose and the resolution passed by not less two thirds of the Council voting on it.

3.2 Mr Maher has been associated with Southend United Football club since 1998 when he joined Southend United from Tottenham Hotspur and quickly made his mark, making 18 appearances during his first season.

- 3.3 During his ten years as a Southend player Mr Maher made over 420 appearances for the club and captained Southend to promotion twice, from League Two to the Championship, in successive seasons.
- 3.4 Following a 22-year playing career, which included 585 first team appearances, Mr Maher became a coach and in October 2015 he returned to Southend in a coaching capacity, assisting the under 21s and youth teams at the club and at the end of November 2015, he was appointed the U21s manager of the club. After a short absence, he returned to Southend in October 2021 as Head Coach. Since that time, he came close to the promotion play-offs twice. The team would also be towards the top of the National League, if it were not for the current 10 point deduction due to circumstances out of Mr Maher's control.
- 3.5 In early 2023, with the club facing considerable difficulties off the field (non-payment of staff and players) he had a run of 5 wins from 6 matches and was awarded National League Manager of the Month in February 2023.
- 3.6 During a recent period at the Boots and Laces training ground the team were without running water or a working toilet, Mr Maher used his own money to hire more appropriate, hygienic premises.
- 3.7 In summary, Anna Firth MP considers that Mr Maher's commitment to the club and the City has gone far above and beyond that of what one could reasonably accept from a normal coach and believes to confer the honour of Freedom of the City would be an appropriate reward for a man who has given so much to Southend.

4. Reasons for Decision

- 4.1. To make a recommendation to Council to confer the Freedom of the City of Southend-on-Sea on Mr Kevin Andrew Maher.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. None

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The Council has the power under Section 249(9) of the Local Government Act 1972 to spend a reasonable sum as thought fit for the purpose of conferring the honour of Freedom of the City.
- 6.2. It is proposed to present a ceremonial scroll to Mr Maher, with the costs to be met from existing budget provision.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. As set out in the report.

8. Policy Context

8.1 None

9. Carbon Impact

9.1. None

10. Equalities

10.1. None

11. Consultation

11.1. Group Leaders

12. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	14 th November 2023
Monitoring Officer	Kim Sawyer	15 th November 2023
Executive Director(s)	Claire Shuter	14 th November 2023
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr Cox	17 th November 2023