
29 SEPTEMBER 2022

FREEDOM OF ARGYLL AND BUTE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Donald MacMillan, BEM has represented the people and communities of Argyll and Bute as a local independent councillor for almost 40 years. Often cited as one of Scotland's oldest and longest serving elected members, his service as a councillor concluded in May 2022 at the age of 94.
- 1.2** Mr MacMillan was first elected to represent his community in 1984, serving on Strathclyde Regional Council and Argyll and Bute District Council prior to the reorganisation of Scottish local government in 1996. He was elected to the then-Lochgilphead ward of the new Argyll and Bute Council in 1995 in readiness for the new unitary authority coming into effect, and continued to represent the area through a variety of ward boundary changes until 2022.
- 1.3** He received the British Empire Medal (BEM) in Her Majesty the Queen's New Year Honours in 2019, for his services to local government in Scotland.
- 1.4** The Council has been asked to give consideration to awarding the Freedom of Argyll and Bute to Donald MacMillan, BEM in recognition of his decades of service to the community, through his role as a councillor and also his service on other organisations. Council is invited to consider this request.

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2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** Donald MacMillan, BEM has represented the people and communities of Argyll and Bute as a local independent councillor for almost 40 years. Often cited as one of Scotland's oldest and longest serving elected members, his service as a councillor concluded in May 2022 at the age of 94.
- 2.2** Mr MacMillan was first elected to represent his community in 1984, serving on Strathclyde Regional Council and Argyll and Bute District Council prior to the reorganisation of Scottish local government in 1996. He was elected to the then-Lochgilphead ward of the new Argyll and Bute Council in 1995 in readiness for the new unitary authority coming into effect and continued to represent the area through a variety of ward boundary changes until 2022.
- 2.3** In recognition of his decades of service, he received the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to local government in Scotland in HM The Queen's New Year Honours 2019.
- 2.4** The Council has been asked to give consideration to awarding the Freedom of Argyll and Bute to Donald MacMillan in recognition of his many years of service to the community, through his role as a councillor and also his service on other organisations. Council is invited to consider this request.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** The Council is invited to consider the request to award the Freedom of Argyll and Bute to Donald MacMillan, BEM in recognition of his many years of service to Argyll and Bute as a local councillor and on other organisations serving the community; and if agreed request the Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support make the necessary arrangements.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1 The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 makes provision for local authorities to award the freedom of the area to people who have given particular service or brought distinction to the district.
- 4.2 Donald MacMillan (or Donnie, as he is more commonly known to the people of Mid Argyll where he lives) was first elected to represent his community in 1984, serving on Strathclyde Regional Council and Argyll and Bute District Council prior to the reorganisation of Scottish local government in 1996.
- 4.3 Since then he has represented his home town of Lochgilphead through various ward boundary changes, including the expansion of the ward to encompass the neighbouring communities of Ardrishaig, Inveraray, Furnace, Minard, Crinan, Ardfern and a myriad of other settlements in between - all of whom came to know and recognise the familiar face of 'wee Donnie' as he is very affectionately known.
- 4.4 Donnie has played a very active role at the council, sitting on a number of committees over the years including Planning, Licensing and latterly Community Services. His service to the council has included periods as Depute Provost, Area Committee Vice-Chair and Depute Policy Lead among other roles. He was also a committed member of the World War 1 Commemoration Steering Group, which convened prior to 2014 to plan and prepare for the four-year centenary commemorations over the 2014 to 2018 period.
- 4.5 He has also been active within many other organisations over the years, appointed to a number of outside bodies to represent the council and its communities. A particular area of interest for Donnie was his service on the former Joint Police Boards at both regional and national level, prior to the reform of Scottish policing, the creation of the single national force Police Scotland and the consequent changes in its scrutiny and governance, moving from joint boards to the Scottish Police Authority. Latterly Donnie also served as a board member for Argyll Community Housing Association - another role which was important to him and to which he was thoroughly committed.
- 4.6 While he enjoyed his work on these outside organisations and his committee work, helping local people has always been the most important factor for Donnie in terms of his role as a councillor. His focus has remained on the local services that mattered to the people who lived and worked alongside him and he has been a staunch champion for local health and care services as well as those delivered by the local authority.

- 4.7** Donnie is undoubtedly one of Lochgilphead's most well-known faces and the reason for this is linked inextricably to his priorities and approach as a councillor - helping local people and doing so by working with them face to face. Even just prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Donnie could most often be found in Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig town centres, making sure that he was available and visible in the spaces that people use and ensuring that he was able to speak to them and deal with any queries face to face. Lochgilphead's Colchester Square has very frequently been an open air 'surgery' venue for Donnie - informal and unscheduled but very much valued by the local people who knew where and when they could find help from Donnie if they needed it.
- 4.8** As a much-loved and extremely popular local councillor for decades, it was no surprise to the community, but a great surprise to him, that he was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to local government in Scotland in 2019, in Her Majesty the Queen's New Year Honours List. He received his medal with great pride in May that year, surrounded by family, friends and colleagues from across Argyll and Bute.
- 4.9** Donnie's service as a local councillor concluded in May 2022 at the age of 94 and after nearly 40 years of service to the community. Donnie, though, is still out and about in his home town nearly every day and remains rightly proud of his time as one of Scotland's oldest and longest serving local councillors.
- 4.10** One of his successors to the Mid Argyll ward, Councillor Jan Brown, has made contact with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director with responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support in relation to arrangements for a formal request to Council to consider making the award of Freedom of Argyll and Bute, on the basis that this is very richly deserved given the extent of his commitment to serving his community.
- 4.11** Section 206 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 makes provision for councils to award the Freedom of the district by resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the voting members at a meeting of the Council which specifies the proposal as an item of business.
- 4.12** The Council keeps a roll containing the names of people admitted as Freemen of Argyll and Bute in accordance with this section of the Act. The last awards of Freedom of Argyll and Bute were made to former Provost William Petrie in 2012, to Helensburgh tennis player Gordon Reid in 2016 and to former Lord-Lieutenant of Argyll and Bute, Patrick Stewart CVO MBE, in 2022.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1** Donald MacMillan, BEM has given decades of service to communities in Argyll and Bute as a local councillor. His dedication has been of a level to warrant receipt of a national Honour from the Queen and he has dedicated many years of his life to helping the people of the community who live and work alongside him.
- 5.2** Members of the Council are invited to consider the request to confer the Freedom of Argyll and Bute on Donald MacMillan, BEM in recognition of his years of service.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Policy; none.
- 6.2** Financial; none.
- 6.3** Legal; none.
- 6.4** HR; none
- 6.5** Fairer Scotland Duty: none
 - 6.5.1** Equalities - protected characteristics; none
 - 6.5.2** Socio-economic Duty; none
 - 6.5.3** Islands; none
- 6.6** Risk; none
- 6.7** Customer Service; none

**Executive Director with Responsibility for Legal and Regulatory Support –
Douglas Hendry**

3rd August 2022

For further information please contact Aileen McNicol, Leadership Support and Member Services Manager, on 01546 604014 or by email aileen.mcnicol@argyll-bute.gov.uk