

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Charlotte Benjamin - Director of Legal and Governance Services
Relevant Executive Member:	Councillor Nicky Walker Executive Member for Finance
Submitted to:	Council
Date:	27 November 2024
Title:	Appointment of Honorary Recorder of Middlesbrough
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A successful and ambitious town
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Choose an item.
Subject to call in?:	No
Why:	

Proposed decision(s)

Council is asked to approve the following recommendation:-

The appointment of His Honour Francis Laird KC as Honorary Recorder of Middlesbrough, with immediate effect and for the duration of his tenure of the post of Senior Circuit Judge at Teesside Combined Court Centre.

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to seek a decision in regards to the appointment of an Honorary Recorder in Middlesbrough.

An Honorary Recorder is an unpaid, ceremonial office created to maintain and develop close links between councils and the judiciary, and to encourage an understanding of the judicial system among the community.

There has been a succession of Honorary Recorders in Middlesbrough since 2002 and this further appointment will formalise the relationship between the judiciary and the Council.

The power to appoint an Honorary Recorder is given to full Council by way of Section 54 of the Courts Act 1971.

1. Purpose

1.1 To seek a decision in regards to the appointment of an Honorary Recorder of Middlesbrough.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Council

- Approves the appointment of His Honour Judge Francis Laird KC as Honorary Recorder of Middlesbrough, with immediate effect and for the duration of his tenure of the post of Senior Circuit Judge at Teesside Combined Court Centre

3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 To appoint an Honorary Recorder for Middlesbrough to formalise the relationship between the judiciary and the Council.

4. Background and relevant information

4.1 The power to appoint an Honorary Recorder is given to full Council by way of Section 54 of the Courts Act 1971.

4.2 An Honorary Recorder is an unpaid, ceremonial office created to maintain and develop close links between councils and the judiciary, and to encourage an understanding of the judicial system among the community. The functions of Honorary Recorder include attending ceremonial and civic functions and inviting Members of the Council to attend judicial events. The Lord Chief Justice is keen for Councils to use the power available to them to make such an appointment.

4.3 The role of Honorary Recorder is normally reserved to Senior Circuit Judges or Resident Judges. The usual approach is for the position to be attached to a specific judge, continuing for as long as they remain the Senior Circuit or Resident Judge for the area.

4.4 HHJ Peter J Fox QC held the role of Honorary Recorder of Middlesbrough between 2002 and 2012, followed by HHJ Simon N Bourne-Arton QC until September 2019, and subsequently HHJ Paul Watson KC until his retirement in February 2024.

4.5 On the 15th July 2024 the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales, the Right Honourable the Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill appointed His Honour Judge

Francis Laird KC to be a Senior Circuit Judge, Resident Judge based at Teesside Combined Court.

4.6 The appointment of Honorary Recorders is in the sole gift of local authorities, however, the Lord Chief Justice's Guidelines for the appointment of Honorary Recorders requests that Councils consult the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales prior to making an appointment.

4.7 The Head of Legal Services (People) wrote to the Senior Presiding Judge's office on behalf of the Council and support was confirmed for the proposal to appoint HHJ Laird KC to the role of Honorary Recorder for Middlesbrough.

5. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

5.1 The Council could decide not to appoint an Honorary Recorder, however, the town would not benefit from the positive outcomes detailed in the body of the report.

6. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	The role of Honorary Recorder is an unpaid position, therefore there are no financial implications associated with making an appointment.
Legal	Section 54 of the Courts Act 1971 gives the Council power to appoint an Honorary Recorder for Middlesbrough. The appointment does not require the approval of the Lord Chancellor or Lord Chief Justice
Risk	There are no risks associated with appointing an Honorary Recorder. Making an appointment provides as opportunity for strengthening the relationship between the judiciary and the Council.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	None.
Climate Change / Environmental	None.
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	None.
Data Protection	None.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
None		

Appendices

1	None
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
None		

Contact: Ann-Marie Wilson - Head of Legal Services (People)

Email: annmarie_wilson@middlesbrough.gov.uk