

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday 8th December 2021

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following notice of motion has been received, in accordance with Standing Order 19.

Motion from *Councillor Peter Hiller*

Seconded by *Councillor Mohammed Jamil*

“Council resolves:

Mr Mayor. Members there aren't many people that I can think of who could eclipse or even match the contribution that Gillian Beasley OBE has made to our city.

She has dedicated most of her life to public service, a career spanning just short of 40 years, almost half of which she has been at the helm of Peterborough City Council.

As those who know Gillian will vouch, her role as chief executive has been more, so much more than a day job - her life's work for our city and her passion for Peterborough's diverse population has made this place a better place.

She became chief executive of the council in 2002, but her career began up north two decades prior as a trainee lawyer with Leeds City Council in 1983.

Over the next ten years she worked with the government on the Children Act 1989 and gave her time pro bono with the National Council for Disabled Children and for the National Children's Bureau. She also trained thousands of lawyers in children's law for the Law Society.

In 1989 Gillian joined Cambridgeshire County Council as assistant solicitor in the child protection team and went on to become principal solicitor for child protection and then head of legal services for the whole council, a role she held until she left in 1997 to join Peterborough City Council as director of law and administration. In that role she was responsible for setting up the new constitutional arrangements when the city council split from Cambridgeshire to become a unitary authority.

In 2000 she was appointed director of environment and legal services and then in 2002 she was successful in her application to be our chief executive.

Thirteen years later she was appointed chief executive of Cambridgeshire County Council, making hers the first shared role for two principal councils in the country.

During her career Gillian has advised government on children's law, migration impacts, government housing and cohesion, and has served on various commissions in this regard. She also led on complex child sexual exploitation cases, which helped inform and shape local government practice in this area. As chair of a national charity, UNITAS, she helped young people access and progress in mainstream education and training through involvement with the arts.

Furthermore, she was influential in negotiating with the government on the setting up of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The transformation that Peterborough has undergone in recent years is clear for all to see and Gillian has played a key role in that process. She has spent considerable time building relationships with organisations, groups and individuals in our city and she has always championed and supported the many different faiths and cultures. She has gone out of her way to understand and become part of our diverse communities and, for example, has fasted during Ramadan, celebrated Diwali and the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's birth, taken part in PRIDE events and raised awareness of the injustices faced by the Windrush generation. In 2016 she abseiled 150ft down the side of our beautiful cathedral as part of the Peterborough 900 campaign, helping raise thousands of pounds to improve facilities for visitors and worshippers at the cathedral leading up to its 900th anniversary in 2018.

Whilst often unassuming in demeanour, she is undoubtedly a woman of profound influence in Peterborough; inspiring young and not so young people from all backgrounds to overcome prejudice and social barriers, to achieve, to excel and to reach the very top of their professions.

In 2009 Gillian received an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list for services to local government. She also holds an Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration from Anglia Ruskin University and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Gillian has dedicated her whole life to public service and has spent her career working and excelling in many local government roles, helping to make a real difference to so many people.

In recognition of the above, WE DO HEREBY CONFER the honorary Freedom of the City upon Gillian Beasley, of Peterborough.”