

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Beach Ballroom
ABERDEEN, 25 November 2017

MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

Sederunt:

Lord Provost Barney Crockett, Chairperson;
Depute Provost Alan Donnelly; and

COUNCILLORS

CHRISTIAN ALLARD
ALISON ALPHONSE
PHILIP BELL
DAVID CAMERON
JOHN COOKE
NEIL COPLAND
WILLIAM CORMIE
STEVEN DELANEY
JACQUELINE DUNBAR
LESLEY DUNBAR
SARAH DUNCAN
STEPHEN FLYNN
GORDON GRAHAM
ROSS GRANT
MARTIN GREIG
DELL HENRICKSON
RYAN HOUGHTON
MICHAEL HUTCHISON
CLAIRE IMRIE

FREDDIE JOHN
JENNIFER LAING
DOUGLAS LUMSDEN
SANDRA MACDONALD
NEIL MacGREGOR
AVRIL MacKENZIE
CATRIONA MacKENZIE
ALEXANDER McLELLAN
CIARÁN McRAE
M. TAUQEER MALIK
THOMAS MASON MSP
ALEXANDER NICOLL
JAMES NOBLE
JOHN REYNOLDS
PHILIP SELLAR
SANDY STUART
and
JOHN WHEELER

Lord Provost Barney Crockett, in the Chair

The agenda associated with this minute can be found at:-

<https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=122&MId=6024&Ver=4>

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

Special Council Meeting, Saturday, 25 November 2017

With reference to Article 34 of the minute of its meeting of 15 March 2017, and in accordance with arrangements made pursuant thereto, the Council convened this day at the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen, for the purpose of admitting Denis Law CBE as an honorary Freeman of the City of Aberdeen.

The proceedings were opened by the Lord Provost who said:-

“My Lords and Ladies, Members of Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, fellow Councillors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and Denis Law.

I am absolutely delighted to welcome you all to this historic ceremony at which the Freedom of the City of Aberdeen is being bestowed on Denis Law CBE - in recognition of his outstanding career as a world renowned footballer, his dedication to charitable endeavour and his commitment to community sport in Aberdeen.”

There followed the singing of a hymn, and after a prayer by the Reverend Stephen Taylor, City Chaplain, the Lord Provost continued:-

“The story of Denis Law is a fascinating tale of triumph over adversity that saw a young Aberdeen loon rise from humble beginnings to become one of the greatest football players the world has ever seen.

For those from further afield, ‘loon’ is the word in the North-East of Scotland’s Doric language used to describe a young boy or teenage male. This particular loon went on to become a legend.

The story of Aberdeen’s most famous sporting son has been well told in print and on screen but is one worthy of repeating.

Denis was born to George and Robina on 24 February 1940 at 6 Printfield Terrace, in Woodside, Aberdeen. He was the youngest of seven children, the son of a fisherman.

Despite difficulties with his vision as a boy, to the extent of playing football with one eye closed throughout his childhood, he never once let that deter him from chasing the dream of being the best. A nation owes a debt of gratitude for that spirit of perseverance.

Denis was obsessed with football from a very young age and spent all his time playing and watching local teams. He was a keen supporter of Aberdeen Football Club and would try to gain entry into Pittodrie even when he didn’t have enough money to pay for a ticket. He remains a life-long Dons fan.

His first experience of playing in a team came when he was selected to play for Hilton Primary School under-11s at the age of nine. Clearly his early promise was already shining through.

After finishing primary school he progressed to Powis Secondary School, now known as St Machar Academy.

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At 13 years of age Denis joined Aberdeen Lads Club, and helped raise funds to form the Lads Club Colts. Showing promise, he was soon selected to play for Aberdeen Schoolboys and then went on to represent Scotland Schoolboys.

In April 1955 Denis was invited for a trial at Huddersfield Town. Despite an uncharacteristically quiet performance, where his small build and poor eyesight were picked up on, he was signed by the club.

Although homesick at first, things eventually worked out for Denis when another famous Scottish football name became manager of Huddersfield - Bill Shankly.

Denis made his professional debut aged 16 on Christmas Eve in 1956 in a 2-0 win against Notts County. Under the influence of his new manager he began to flourish and he signed his first professional contract with Huddersfield in February 1957.

While at Huddersfield, Denis underwent correctional eye surgery; eventually allowing him to play with both eyes open which not only improved his skill on the ball but also gave him the self-confidence to shine as one of the team's most inventive young players.

In March 1960 Denis signed for Manchester City for a then British record fee of £55,000.

He played for one season before signing for Torino FC in June 1961 for another British record transfer fee of £110,000. It is fair to say Denis did not enjoy the Italian style of defensive football, which went against his creative nature, and returned to the UK the following year after narrowly escaping from a serious car accident.

In July 1962 Manchester United signed Denis for another British record fee of £115,000. The new recruit was an instant success at Old Trafford as he helped transform Manchester United into a winning team.

In 1963 under the guidance of Matt Busby, Denis scored a hat-trick in a 5-0 demolition of his old side Huddersfield Town before meeting Leicester City in the FA Cup Final. He scored the first goal in a 3-1 win as the goals kept flowing.

Manchester United also went on to win the league while Denis finished the season as top scorer; his skill, agility and pace helped him become one of the most clinical finishers in Europe.

Denis was in his prime throughout seasons 63/64/65 and became world famous. Of course every superstar needs a trademark and in the case of Denis, it was the iconic goal celebration which we are all so familiar with and which we see around us today.

In 1964 Denis was crowned Europe's player of the year at the FIFA Ballon D'or ceremony. Denis remains the only Scottish player to ever receive the most prestigious award in the beautiful game.

We had the honour of hosting the Scottish National Team just a long stone's throw from here earlier in the month, for the international against the Netherlands, what would the current Scotland team give for a player as inspirational as Denis?

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He holds the record for the most hat-tricks scored by a Manchester United player, with an impressive ratio of a goal every other game. Denis has scored more goals per game for Manchester United than any other player.

Fellow Manchester United player George Best summed it up when he said: "Denis Law, simply the greatest."

Denis eventually left Manchester United in April 1973 and re-joined Manchester City for one final season in a move that was to prove eventful. Without their talisman, Manchester United were in desperate trouble at the foot of the league table and on the last day of the season in 1973-74, the Manchester derby ended in gloom for United at Old Trafford. With only minutes left, an instinctive back-heel shot from Denis gave City the win.

Denis chose not to celebrate his goal against his former team in what was to be his last game in league football. Manchester United were relegated to the second division later that day by virtue of other results.

Despite his infamous part in that day, Denis remains a true Manchester United legend amongst the fans who nicknamed him 'The King of Old Trafford' and 'The Lawman'.

Sir Alex Ferguson, a Freeman of Aberdeen and celebrated manager of Manchester United, said of Denis: "We all need role models. Denis was a year and half older than me; I looked at him and thought that's what I want to be."

Pele, regarded by so many as the world's greatest ever player, said: "Denis Law was the only British player good enough to play for Brazil."

Denis is a proud Scot though and wore the dark blue of his country with distinction.

In 1958, Scotland manager Matt Busby gave Denis his first international cap against Wales. He hit the ground running and scored his first international goal in a 3-0 win at St Ninian Park. At 18 years of age he was the youngest player to be capped by Scotland.

In the 1967 Home Championships, Denis scored a memorable goal in Scotland's famous 3-2 victory over England at Wembley - the match which made Scotland the 'unofficial' world champions and eventually won them the tournament.

In his 16-year international career Denis gained 55 caps and scored 30 goals for his country. He was recognised as Scotland's golden player by the SFA as part of Uefa's jubilee celebrations in 2003. Denis Law is the nation's most prolific goal scorer.

Although Denis retired from football a number of years ago now he is still passionate about the game and is always keen to know the latest scores for the Dons and Manchester United.

Away from football he has devoted his time to his family and working tirelessly on behalf of various charities.

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Indeed, Denis was awarded a CBE by Buckingham Palace for his charity work as well as his sporting achievements. That honour is fitting recognition for his commendable fundraising work with the Denis Law Legacy Trust, Streetsport, Meningitis Now and Cancer Research UK.

He has been awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by the Robert Gordon University in recognition of his support for the Streetsport initiative in Aberdeen. He also holds degrees from the University of Aberdeen and St Andrew's University.

The Denis Law Legacy Trust was established to provide young people with free access to sport and other creative activities and help disadvantaged young people achieve positive destinations in life.

Its overall aim is to support and empower young people to be confident, capable, independent and responsible citizens within their communities.

The Trust works in partnership with a range of businesses, organisations, individuals and volunteers and students at the Robert Gordon University to deliver its activities and programmes.

It has worked closely with Aberdeen City Council on an initiative to remove 'No Ball Games' signs from parks and play areas - the first city in the UK to do so - in an effort to encourage children to take part in regular physical activity.

The charity has established Scotland's first 'Cruyff Court' in Aberdeen in partnership with the Johan Cruyff Foundation and Aberdeen City Council, which opened in July 2017.

A Cruyff Court is a concept devised by Dutch footballing legend Johan Cruyff, which enables the development of a free of charge, floodlit, all-weather multi-sports pitch which you do not have to book, within a built up urban environment.

The introduction of the Cruyff Court Denis Law pitch offers access to a wide range of free sports and creative activity sessions, including freestyle football, street hockey, dance and art - all of which help underpin the educational, social and inclusive values of both the Cruyff Foundation and the Denis Law Legacy Trust.

Streetsport - Denis Law Legacy Trust's flagship initiative - delivers free sports and creative activities for young people 50 weeks of the year, by deploying mobile activity arenas directly into local communities in the evenings during peak times of anti-social behaviour.

It aims to 'reduce instances of youth crime and anti-social behaviour; promote health and wellbeing and encourage inclusivity through sport, physical activity and creative endeavour'.

For many the two main barriers to participation in sport are cost and travel and over the last 10 years Denis Law's Streetsport has helped to eliminate both of these barriers.

The majority of the young people that the Trust targets are not associated with established sports clubs or youth groups, and by demonstrating measurable results in a

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number of areas including crime reduction, skills development, partnership building and volunteering, the Legacy Trust has helped to foster a sense of social value and belonging within many regeneration communities. As a city, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude for the work that has been done.

Streetsport has received numerous awards over the years. This year alone they include:

- UK national winner at the Pride of Sport Awards - this award, which the Trust received only a few days ago, recognises a group of people who have worked together in partnership as a force for good in their local community, improving the lives of people around them through sport.
- Aberdeen Sport Awards winner - Best Community Sports Project in October.
- The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the MBE for volunteer groups, in June.
- In April, the UK national winner at the Streetgames Awards - Sport for Good category. This award recognises a project which uses sport and its benefits to change the lives of young people.
- And in January, recognition for the greatest contribution to Police priorities at the National Police Awards.

Such is the reputation of Streetsport, his Royal Highness Prince Harry chose the initiative as his first ever official visit to Aberdeen when he travelled north last year.

From being a loon playing football with your pals, to playing alongside some of the most entertaining and skilful footballers the world has ever seen, for your dedication to charitable work and the work that continues to be done by the Denis Law Legacy Trust - it's all truly awe inspiring. Denis - you are a living legend!

The city of Aberdeen has many fine traditions and foremost amongst these is the conferral of the Freedom of the City on those who in the Council and its citizens hold in high regard and have accomplished eminence in many fields of public service and achievement.

The Freedom of the City is by far the highest honour the City of Aberdeen can bestow and dates back to the 12th Century.

The Freedom Roll contains the names of many great people who have commanded the admiration of the city, the nation and the world. Those honoured in the past 100 years include Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Sir Alex Ferguson, the Highlanders, 4th Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, and the comedy trio Scotland the What?.

Those admitted to the Freedom Roll have been those of whom the citizens of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen have the highest regard. Conferrals of the Freedom of the City were made and I quote: "In token of the most devoted love and affection of the most distinguished respect."

There is little doubt that Denis Law has won that right.

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On this day, Saturday the twenty-fifth of November 2017, it is my pleasure to call upon the Chief Executive, Angela Scott, to read the Burgess Ticket and sign the Roll.”

Thereupon, the Chief Executive read the terms of the entry in the Burgess Register which, on signature would formally confer upon Denis Law the Freedom of the City. The text on the ticket was as follows:-

At Aberdeen the Twenty Fifth of
November in the year Two Thousand
and Seventeen in the Presence of the
Lord Provost and other Members of
Aberdeen City Council

WHICH DAY

Denis Law

Commander of the Order of the British Empire, was admitted and received as a Free Burgess and Guild Brother of the City and Royal Burgh of Aberdeen in recognition of his outstanding career as a world renowned footballer, his dedication to charitable endeavour and his commitment to community sport in Aberdeen.

Extracted from the City Records
and the City Seal hereto affixed

ANGELA SCOTT
Chief Executive

Thereafter the Lord Provost, the Chief Executive and Denis Law CBE signed the Burgess Roll.

The Lord Provost then presented Denis Law CBE with a silver casket bearing the City Crest and suitably inscribed, and the Chief Executive affixed the Burgess Ticket to his cap.

Denis Law CBE acknowledged the tremendous honour which had been conferred on him with a short speech of thanks.

The Lord Provost then called for three cheers for the City's newest Freeman, a call which brought forth an enthusiastic response. Thereafter the national anthem was sung and Reverend Taylor pronounced the benediction. Following which the proceedings ended.

- **BARNEY CROCKETT, Lord Provost**.