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7. **Nominations for the Coventry Award of Merit – Extracted Minute and Appendix (Pages 3 - 8)**

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Agenda Item 7
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Council – 25 March 2025

**Recommendation from Cabinet
Member for Policy and
Leadership, 17 March 2025**

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership held at 1.00
pm on Monday, 17 March 2025

Members Present: Councillor G Duggins (Cabinet Member)
 Councillor G Ridley (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Service Area):

Law and Governance: S Bennett, A West

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

10. Nominations for the Coventry Award of Merit

The Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance which indicated that the Coventry Award of Merit was established by the City Council in the 1960s as a means of acknowledging and honouring personal behaviour reflecting the highest ideals of citizenship or outstanding performance in any field of human endeavour which enhances the good name of Coventry and affords inspiration to its citizens.

Any person, company or other organisation shall be eligible for consideration for the Coventry Award of Merit who has:-

- Rendered outstanding service to the City of Coventry in service to the local community.
- By outstanding personal effort in the field of sport, industry, government or the arts, brought particular renown to the City of Coventry.
- Made an outstanding contribution to the national life or in international affairs in any field of human activity in a manner which has brought credit upon the City of Coventry.
- By personal example of courage or devotion to duty and service to others, demonstrated the highest ideals of citizenship.

The Award has previously taken the form of a citation under the Common Seal together with a presentation of a gold medallion pendant from a ribbon in the City's

colours. The motif on the medallion is the phoenix, symbolising the resurgence of Coventry from the flames of the Blitz. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the Terms of Reference for the Award and Appendix 2 detailed the list of former recipients.

Nominations for the Award were considered by the Coventry Award of Merit Advisory Panel at their meeting on 13 March, 2025 and a corresponding private item on the agenda (Minute 13/24 below) provided details of the unanimous Advisory Panel's recommendations in relation to those nominations.

RESOLVED that, having considered the unanimous recommendations of the Coventry Award of Merit Advisory Panel, the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership recommends that Council grants the Coventry Award of Merit to the following recipients:-

- 1) Pauline Black OBE DL**
- 2) Professor Stuart Croft DL**
- 3) Sybil Hanson**
- 4) Councillor AS Khan**
- 5) Mark Robins**
- 6) Jon Sharp**

(Note: Citations for the nominees are appended to these Minutes)

Pauline Black OBE DL

Pauline is an icon of British music who was a major part of the 2-Tone and Ska music revolution in the 1970s that became synonymous with Coventry and helped spread a message of racial equality.

Pauline was one of the founder members of The Selecter, and over 50 years later still performs with the group. Her face and voice are among the most recognised in the music world. She was a pioneer for Black performers and in particular Black women in music but is far more than an outstanding musician – she is an author, actress and a radio presenter.

She is a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Midlands and combines her music career with supporting many local community projects and events. She promotes her Coventry connection with pride and has brought huge recognition and credit to our city across the world and made a massively positive impact on multiculturalism in the UK.

Professor Stuart Croft

Stuart is the Vice-Chancellor and President of The University of Warwick and has been part of this key part of city life since 2007. He has dedicated his whole life to supporting, promoting, and delivering higher education and academia that transforms lives and creates positive change for society.

Stuart has been instrumental in bringing inclusive economic growth to Coventry, becoming a leading figure in the £700m Connect Programme and Coventry Gigafactory project. He believes the university must be a part of city life and a good neighbour, and has helped build links with local communities, charities and residents.

He has also transformed the Warwick Arts Centre to help it become one of the leading cultural destinations in our region, while connecting our city's diverse communities through the arts and giving opportunities for local artists. All this while the University has expanded in student and staff numbers to over 40,000, many of whom live in the city and contribute to the local economy.

Sybil Hanson

For over 50 years Sybil has been a leading figure in education in Coventry. Having begun her teaching career in 1961, she came to the city in 1972 and spent 25 years at Blue Coat CE School, initially as Head of Mathematics before being appointed Deputy Head in 1977.

Since her retirement in 1997, Sybil has continued to make a significant contribution to education in Coventry, including as a member of the Board of Directors for the Inspire Education Trust, the Diocesan Board of Education, and the Schools Forum.

This year, Sybil turned 85 and continues to play a key role in the education debate in Coventry. She has given a huge amount of her time, experience and knowledge over the years and her contribution is highly valued by the many organisations with which she works. Her actions truly reflect her character.

Councillor Abdul Salam Khan

Abdul began his career in local government in 2007 when he was elected as a city councillor for Foleshill – the place of his birth. He still serves the area and has been a member of the city’s Cabinet for 15 years and Deputy Leader of the Council since 2015 - the first of south Asian origin to hold the post.

Abdul has served all communities within our city without reservation, demonstrating a profound commitment to inclusivity and respect for every individual. He believes the strength of our city lies in its diversity and has fostered a sense of belonging and unity. He is an exemplary public servant who is always willing to listen and respond to community concerns.

He represents the city around the world as he helps lead Coventry’s work as a city of peace and reconciliation, telling its story and inspiring others towards friendship. Here at home, he is a key figure behind the city’s Rising Peace Forum and has been a school governor and magistrate. He is committed to making the world a better place and is a role model for many.

Mark Robins

When Mark Robins took over at the helm of Coventry City Football Club in 2017, the club, along with its fanbase, was at an all-time low. He took a club that was at one of its lowest points in its history and restored its pride.

He not only made a better team, he helped re-establish the club as a true part of the city. He took players and staff into the community via trips to local workplaces and schools. He built links with community groups, supported work in diversity and equality, and even found time to send personal messages of support to fans who lost loved ones.

Mark lived up to the great Jimmy Hill’s quote of “You can beat a football club but you can’t beat a football club and a city,” by instilling a real sense of togetherness and pride in Coventry. Mark demonstrated the highest ideals of citizenship and service. He took the city of Coventry and its people to his heart and gave them back their football club.

Jon Sharp

Jon is a true Coventrian who was born in Hillfields and developed his love for rugby while a student at Bablake Grammar School. After building a successful career in the aero industry, John returned home to take over at Coventry Rugby Club as it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The club is now in its best place for a generation with a strong fan base – but Jon has made it more than a club. He has opened it up to be a part of the community and has formed the charity the Coventry Rugby Community Foundation. Through “Project 500”, Jon and the club have helped over 6,000 children enjoy sports and activities, hot meals and family food hampers.

In a wide range of community initiatives, players regularly visit primary schools to help pupils with reading and PE; 50+ walking rugby has been introduced to help people stay fit and build a stronger community; and schools and local clubs and organisations are able to use the club’s facilities. Jon has combined his love for rugby and that for his city and built something special for everyone.

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