

**To:** City Executive Board

**Date:** 1 September 2010 **Item No:** 9

**Report of:** Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

**Title of Report:** Establishment of Honorary Position of Oxford City Poet

### Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To set out the role, functions, and process for appointing an honorary City Poet.

**Key decision?** No

**Executive lead member:** Councillor Bob Price

**Report approved by:**

**Finance:**  
**Legal:** Dan Rawstorne

**Policy Framework:**  
Tackling inequalities and supporting communities  
Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life

**Recommendation(s):** That the City Executive Board should:

1. Establish the position of honorary City Poet
2. Agree the honorary City Poet's role
3. Agree the process for recruiting the honorary City Poet.

### **Background**

On 25 January 2010 Full Council adopted the following Motion on Notice – proposed by Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Pressel - by general assent.

“This Council recognizes and values Oxford’s long and distinguished record in the arts and wishes to celebrate and encourage new talent in the City. In particular, this Council recognises that Oxford is gaining a nationwide

reputation for performance poetry and, in line with its aspirations to be recognized as a City of Culture, is committed to supporting such artistic endeavours.

This Council therefore asks the Executive to follow the examples set by Birmingham, Derbyshire, Warwick and Gloucester and establish the honorary position of Oxford Poet Laureate.”

The post endorsed by Full Council is referred to in this note as City Poet rather than Poet Laureate.

### **Purpose**

This note sets out:

- the honorary City Poet’s role
- a process for recruiting the honorary City Poet.

### **Role**

The establishment of the position of honorary City Poet is a new initiative, developed by Oxford City Council in partnership with the Poetry Research Centre at Oxford Brookes University. The Poetry Research Centre has a strong track record in supporting and popularising poetry in this city. It has the connections – partnerships and venues – to ensure that this project will deliver impressive results. The role, as it develops, will also form partnerships with other key stakeholders e.g.: Oxford University, Oxford Inspires and local schools.

The position will usually run for one year.

The honorary City Poet’s overarching role is to:

- produce poetry that celebrates the city of Oxford, its culture, and diverse communities
- have regard to the Council’s corporate priorities and reputation
- promote and raise the profile of poetry to people across the city
- encourage new poetic talent in the city, particularly among our young people and in our more deprived communities
- maintain and promote the city’s nationwide reputation for performance poetry
- help to raise awareness of important local events throughout the year.

The honorary City Poet’s specific brief will be to:

- Produce a minimum of 3 commissions per year
- Run a minimum of three workshop days to enable a diverse range of people from the local community to experience poetry through listening, reading, writing or performing
- Give a minimum of three performances at specific events, taking poetry to a wide variety of audiences.
- work with the schools and under-18s of the city and co-ordinate the appointment of a Junior City Poet post.

It is expected that the appointed poet will expand links with the community and will use the position to seek further commissions, appearances and workshops for the period that they are in post.

## **Recruitment**

### Criteria

- Applicants must live, work or study in Oxford
- Applicants must be aged 18 or over
- The successful applicant will be subject to an enhanced criminal records check, as working regularly with children.

## **Specification**

### Ability to:

- Demonstrate a high standard and range of poetry
- Demonstrate innovative approaches and ideas for promoting poetry
- Get involved in key events and activities throughout the year
- Work in a wide variety of community settings and run workshops
- Willing to perform own work in public
- Work creatively with local/national media in partnership with Oxford City Council's Press Office.

## **Application Procedure**

### Please submit:

- A full CV, including:
  - two referees
  - details of any publications that have featured your work. It is essential to show evidence of published work in the application.
  - details of any awards you have won for your poetry
  - details of any workshops you have given
  - details of any performances you have given.
- A covering letter, detailing:
  - Why you want to become Oxford's first City Poet
  - What you want to gain from the position
  - How the post would contribute to your professional development
  - The skills and experience you would bring to the post
  - How you would hope to work with the local community and raise the profile of poetry
  - The nature of your workshop experience.

The post would be advertised in national literary magazines and in the local press.

The selection will be carried out by Professor Steven Matthews (supported by the staff of the Poetry Research Centre at Oxford Brookes University), the Head of Policy, Culture and Communications, and the Leader of the Council in his capacity as Board Member with responsibility for culture and the arts.

### **Financial and legal implications**

The City Poet is an honorary position and will be undertaken on a voluntary basis. The appointment to the Oxford City laureateship is not intended to create any employment relationship, nor provide any remuneration to the successful appointee. Instead, in return for holding the honorary position, the office holder will be expected to fulfil the above brief and in return will not be subject to close control by the Council and will be afforded the freedom to work independently (subject to the brief).

### **Risk**

A risk analysis has been carried out and there are no significant risks to report.

### **Recommendations**

That the City Executive Board should:

1. Establish the position of honorary City Poet as agreed by Full Council on 25 January 2010
2. Agree the honorary City Poet's role
3. Agree the process for appointing the honorary City Poet.

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**List of background papers: None**

**Version number: 1**