

VERBATIM REPORT OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING ON FRIDAY, 20TH MAY 2005

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor C. Townsley): Good evening, everybody.

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: Good evening, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, Recorder of Leeds, Members of Council, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, can I first of all extend to you a very warm welcome to Leeds Civic Hall for this very special meeting of Council, and can I ask if anybody has a mobile phone or a pager if they would kindly turn it off, or at least put it onto mute.

I don't wish to steal the thunder of the Leader of Council or of other Group Leaders but I cannot possibly let this occasion go by without saying at least a few words about our guest of honour, Jane Tomlinson MBE. However, I will leave that until a bit later on in the proceedings. So if we can turn to Item 1 in the order paper, "Honorary Freeman".

ITEM 1 - HONORARY FREEMAN

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, Mr. Recorder, Honorary Freeman, Members of Parliament, Honorary Aldermen, Councillors, but most of all Jane, Mike, your family and friends, welcome to Leeds Civic Hall. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here today. In this chamber, we are at the heart of our great City, and we are about to bestow on Jane Tomlinson the highest honour that is in our gift, the Freedom of the City of Leeds.

We are here to honour a daughter of Yorkshire, a Citizen of Leeds who has brought huge credit to our City, and has shown the human race the positives that can come out of, and in spite of, adversity.

Many adjectives have been used to describe Jane - "remarkable, inspirational, courageous, our local hero" - some have said you were plain mad. Probably a bit of all of those things, but one thing is certain, her determination, self-sacrifice and sheer guts have meant that by the beginning of this year Jane's running, cycling and swimming has raised £1,150,000 for her charities. (Applause)

Jane was only 26 when she was diagnosed with cancer. Her husband, Mike, newly promoted in his job with the Yorkshire Bank, had been able to bring the family back to live in their native county and in Jane's home city of Wakefield. With her two daughters Suzanne and Rebecca both in school, Jane was thinking about studying for a maths degree at Leeds University, her sights set on becoming a maths teacher. Everything was normal. There was everything to be optimistic about.

Then came the diagnosis. For Jane and her family it was to be a time of fear of the present and apprehension for the future, but youth was on Jane's side and surgery went well. Jane's consultant told her, "Forget about this awful episode. Go on and get on with your life", and she resolved at once to do just that.

During her illness she had become interested in radiography and whilst still recovering in hospital she set aside her ideas for studying maths and sent for forms to apply to the Radiography School at Leeds General Infirmary, citing her ability to empathize with patients, having experienced cancer at first-hand herself. She was interviewed in a hospital bed and was offered and accepted a place before the bandages were even off.

Eventually her training place at the LGI turned into a full-time temporary post and life looked good until the illness returned. After further surgery life became a regime of alternating chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Fighting physically exhausting sickness, Jane returned to work fearing that absence from work would jeopardise her prospects of a permanent post. It took months for the nausea and tiredness to subside, but somehow Jane got through them and was offered a permanent post, paving the way at last to have her longed for third child, Stephen.

Everyone in this chamber has family and loved ones, and we can all imagine the grief that Jane and Mike were forced to share with their young children, their parents, family and friends. Treatment after treatment followed and amazingly, slowly, slowly, though there was never a suggestion that the illness would go away, she began to regain her strength.

At this point Jane's story takes a remarkable turn. Eventually she was fit enough to accept a friend's invitation to a holiday in Australia. The idea was rest and recuperation

but, on a visit to Sydney, Jane spotted a challenge she couldn't resist, the Sydney Harbour Bridge. A 1500 metre climb over steel catwalks and ladders proved that Jane was regaining her stamina and her inner resolve to keep going.

Returning home, Jane felt her strength return enough to start jogging with husband Mike along the roads around Rothwell - perhaps the potholes were all filled in then, Brian! - getting stronger and stronger each time. Soon her sights were on the 2001 "Race for Life" run held here in our own Roundhay Park. It was, of course, in aid of Cancer Research. Here was her first fund-raising target, to raise £500 through sponsorship of the run. Of course she achieved it. Of course she then felt the spur to do more, and in just four years her target to raise funds for charity leaps from £500 to £1 million, and that is why, Jane, you are here today. Every target you have set yourself you have reached and beaten, whether it is to run a marathon, complete a triathlon, link Land's End and John O'Groats by bike or, in your own words, go from Rome to Home, and you have done it.

In your autobiography, written jointly with Mike, you described the pain, the weakness, tiredness and nausea you have overcome at each and every sporting event you have taken part in. Every sportsman and woman knows about meeting the pain threshold, whether it is a fun run or a full marathon. For you it has been less of a threshold more of a mountain of energy-sapping anguish to overcome again and again, and yet you have done it time after time, again and again, and you have achieved your £1 million for the charities that are so dear to you and are so worthy of support. There is the Hannah House Care Home in Rothwell, which provides residential and medical care for children with complex health needs; McMillan Cancer Relief which helps people living with cancer; the Paediatric Acute Services at Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust, where Jane is a radiographer and still works, and Sparks, a charity dedicated to medical research into conditions affecting babies and young children.

And, rightly, the recognition you are due has told the world of the esteem in which your family, your community and indeed your nation hold you. In 2003 you received the MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours. In December 2002 you took the Helen Rollison Award in the BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Others include: Yorkshire Woman of Courage Award, Yorkshire Award Special Achievement Award, BBC Sports Yorkshire and

Lincolnshire Outstanding Award, the Sunday Times Sportswoman of the Year, and the Heart of Yorkshire Awards 2003 Yorkshire Special Award.

So from today you will have another honour to add to your growing list, the Freedom of the City of Leeds. Now, for those with no prior experience of the Freedom, perhaps I should just explain. It is an ancient office going back beyond the Middle Ages to when a Freeman, and they were always men in those days, were allowed to own property and carry on a business. With this came the undoubted privileges of driving your livestock over roads and bridges and walking the streets with your sword unsheathed. Today all this is gone and the honour is symbolic, and I don't recommend you to try the sheep and sword bit, unless you want to have a very interesting conversation with one of our Neighbourhood Wardens. Although I am not so sure about the livestock bit, because if you pick Council day and drove them into here most people would find them indistinguishable from the Members of the Council (Laughter), although we are all on our very best behaviour today.

But the Freedom of the City is a very powerful message that we send to you, and that message is of our love and admiration for what you have achieved. It is for what you have done for others, the unassuming way you have done it, and the inspiration that you have brought to us all.

You have said, Jane, and I quote from your own autobiography, "I don't think of myself as having done anything extraordinary. I ran the marathon because I wanted to do it because I wanted to raise some money. Maybe also because I wanted to say to people that if I can do this as I am, just think what you can do. There is only yourself stopping you."

Jane Tomlinson MBE, thank you for all of this.

Today, though, reminds us too that there is something very special about the human race that sets it apart from all other living things. There is that spark, that vital spark, you might say, that allows some people to achieve against all odds and in the face of huge adversity to help others and to be an inspiration to others. Jane, you are one of those very special people.

For me, Members of Council, it is a singular honour to be able to stand here today and move this resolution that Jane

Tomlinson MBE be admitted to be an Honorary Freeman of the City of Leeds in recognition and high appreciation of her struggle to overcome illness, for her example and inspiration to us all, and for her outstanding effort to raise funds for cancer charities. I so move. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, Distinguished Guests, Lord Lieutenant, fellow Councillors, ladies and gentlemen, like Councillor Carter has just said, it is a great privilege and an honour to be able to second this White Paper to confer the highest honour of office to Jane Tomlinson MBE.

You know, this is a very, very special occasion and something we don't do too often, and it allows us to show our appreciation for an individual's contribution to the life of the City and its Citizens, and she does so with quite recent illustrious company. Five years ago it was Nelson Mandela. Two years ago it was Dame Fanny Waterman, who is here tonight, and the one linking theme between all three of them, and their predecessors, I believe has been their courage and determination to succeed, to achieve almost impossible dreams and goals against all the odds, but I have to say - and the achievements I think Councillor Carter has already read out are absolutely amazing, the MBE, all the Challenge monies, the Helen Rollison, and all those awards that Andrew so ably read out, but I have to say I had my moment of doubt when I read the book - I will plug your book, Mike, it is, "Luxury of Time" - when I came across a passage about dealing with Jane's taste in music, and I have to say it is a horror show for us. Some of you will know this group, Toploader, Marillion and an aptly named Def Leopard, and I can assure you it is a very appropriate name for that kind of music, and I did wonder, you know knowing full well that that music does damage to anybody's brains and hearing within a hundred miles, how somebody like Jane could like that. But, like Jane, I blame Mike for that for buying the tickets and indeed buying her CDs to encourage her to go to these concerts that she does.

But on a serious note, like Andrew, I want to pay enormous tribute to - an adjective already used - for it is the inspiration that she has given so many ordinary people, the motivation to go out and participate in sport, whether it is cycling, swimming or walking. There are hundreds and thousands of people in this City, in this country, who have started to participate in sport, some for the pleasure but also others to actually raise money for cancer, and this is a woman

who started off doing 2.5 kilometres in 25 minutes, I think, if I remember right. So, you know on this side we are all great athletes, as you can see, ready to perform at the highest level, so that sounds quite modest, but then she goes on to achieve something even more remarkable, three London Marathons, three London Triathlons, the York Marathon, the Abbey Dash, which must have been exhausting and a whole range of other achievements in sport which are well beyond us. And if you think that is exhausting, think about this, a half Ironman Triathlon, a three-quarters Ironman Triathlon and a full one in Florida last year in November, and just to tell those uninitiated what that means, it means a 112 mile bike ride, a 2 mile swim and, just when you think you have had enough, you go and run a marathon on top of that. So, you know, clearly, these are amazing achievements by any individual.

Now, I am particular impressed as a cyclist by the Land's End to John O'Groats, which she did with her brother Luke, where she started to really raise money, but the one that is amazing is the one that some of us will remember last year, which was from Rome to Home, as Andrew has mentioned, which was 2,500 miles over the Alps. Now, if you remember, when she got back into the Headrow there was an amazing, spontaneous reception for her by the people of Leeds, who really have taken Jane to their hearts.

Now, I don't know about anybody here who rides bikes but I get a sore bum from here to Garforth. What your bum must have been like after Rome to here is beyond me! (Laughter)

But, you know, sport and taking part in it is ultimately about teamwork as well, and the one thing that strikes you when you read the book, or indeed you listen to Mike and Jane, is the fantastic support she gets from her family. They have been absolute rocks behind her, and I want to pay tribute to her family who have stuck by her through the setbacks, through the illnesses, through all the trials and tribulations, and really supported her, and I know she wouldn't have done those things without the support of her family, and that is Rebecca, Suzanne and Stephen and obviously Mike and Luke, her brother, and all the mothers and fathers involved in that and brothers and sisters. It is incredible what that kind of support can do to an individual, and I have got some good news for you, Jane. I actually like one of the songs you like, and it is by Heather Small called, "What Have You Done Today To Feel Proud Of?" If anybody remembers that song, us young ones should

know that, should be able to quote it, and I think it is a really appropriate sentiment for today, because I think today what we have done is confer the highest office this City can give to an individual who has proven that, despite all the setbacks, despite the illnesses, despite everything else in front of her, she has achieved the impossible dreams and goals on behalf of, particularly, Cancer Research and the money raised.

So again, Like Andrew, I would like to thank you for all the inspiration you have given all of us and, indeed, all of the City and all of the country in all your efforts. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, guests, one of the great privileges of leadership is that Officers very helpfully give you tips and hints and help in what you might be able to say when you speak in Council on occasions like this or any other but, of course, tonight is no different from any other night with me; I have no intentions of looking at what Officers gave me, but I have to say at the outset perhaps it would have been easier for me had I stuck to some of the suggestions that were given me, but as is my wont I will try and say a few things.

It has been my pleasure to be here for the conferment of the Freedom of the City for the Lords Healey and Rees and for Dr. Nelson Mandela and Dame Fanny Waterman, and for each of them I have a different respect and feeling. Politically, I have the greatest respect for Denis Healey and Mervyn Rees, albeit a completely different political philosophy to mine, but nevertheless. For Nelson Mandela, how can anybody with a quarter of a brain possibly fail to be inspired by his life story, and in the case of Fanny Waterman, well, it is a very mixed emotion. I would have never dared call her Fanny Waterman 12 months ago, but there are enough people between me and her today to protect me! (Laughter) For those who recall what I said last year, I have lived in fear of the name Fanny Waterman from the age of seven since I became a miserable failure on the piano.

But all those four people, if I might put it this way, have chosen the route that they have taken, albeit all of them overcoming incredible odds to succeed and becoming giants in their own field but they chose the route that they took quite deliberately and determinedly, but in the case of Jane Tomlinson this is a wholly different situation. This is

somebody who obviously didn't choose the situation in which she has found herself, and nobody in their right minds could ever think that anybody would choose to suffer from cancer, and so it seems to me in those circumstance to have achieved what Jane has achieved is altogether more inspirational for me, I must say, and I think it strikes a cord with everybody, and with ordinary people, that anybody can overcome such terrible personal misfortune but to face it with a smile and a determination to show the world that no matter what problems confront you there is always a hope and a way forward.

There are many more things that I had hoped to say tonight. I feel a rush of emotion in these circumstances. Those who know me will know why. I hope maybe if Jane and her family don't understand, some of my colleagues might explain later, but it is a tremendous privilege and honour for me to support her becoming a Freeman of this great City. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Councillors, it is always slightly unfortunate to be the fourth speaker on such occasions because most of the good words, most of the good phrases, have already been said, and we would entirely and fully endorse what has been said by other people.

The Morley Borough Independents are delighted and honoured to be able to support this particular resolution. We understand and appreciate the real commitment that Jane has shown, and her courage and determination and compassion are a real and genuine inspiration to us all. We are very used to hearing rhetoric across this particular council chamber, to hearing a lot of speeches, but certainly what we would say is that Jane's achievements genuinely leave us in Morley speechless. We are delighted to support this resolution, Lord Mayor. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, Lord Lieutenant, MPs, Honoured Guests and fellow Councillors, when you hear or read or write about someone who has got cancer, you think, "Oh yes, that is So-and-so, he or she has got cancer." When you think or talk about Jane Tomlinson you think, "Oh yes, Jane, she is that sportswoman, who also happens to have cancer." For me, that says an awful lot about the woman we are about to honour with the Freedom of this City.

Jane and her family have lived with cancer for around 14 years. In the first years there was hope of recovery and all seemed well. Then came the news that her illness was back. Hopes were dashed time and again as more and more tests charted the advancing of the disease. I know a lot of people could react to this by closing the curtains, waiting for things to get worse. Maybe this was Jane's first instinct too. If it was, it didn't last long. As a mother and a wife, Jane's first thoughts were for her family who supported her through this illness and who eventually she will leave, but I think I can detect a thought process that went on in Jane's head which gave her a way of turning around the disaster that was enveloping her life, a way of turning cancer on its head and making something positive out of this terrible prognosis.

Jane's work as a radiographer at Leeds General Infirmary has given her special insights into the treatment of cancer, especially the treatment of young children. As well as the frustration of knowing her own condition had no cure, Jane must daily see the hopelessness brought to young lives by the knowledge that science has not yet found the answers we need to conquer this disease. I think this must have put the first ideas into Jane's head that there was still something she could do, not in time to help her own prognosis but for people who will share her situation in future and, of course, the key to this lies in funding research that will lead to a breakthrough in the care and treatment of cancer, and so she started running.

I have got to say, as a person that used to do marathons quite regularly (Laughter), as Jim over there did, it is very difficult when you are fit. I am not fit now, as you can see, so you must have had great courage. At first it was just to see if you could do it, and she could. Then came the fund-raising, tentative at first, just looked for a few hundred pounds for Cancer Research in the Race for Life. Without much serious pushing for sponsors, she exceeded her target by seven times.

As success grew, Jane decided to go for the jackpot and set now the famous target of £1 million for Cancer Research and care of children with the disease. I wonder if Jane realised at the outset what the sacrifices would be. As celebrity status grew for this athlete with cancer so her private life diminished. As honours and awards arrived for her fantastic work, so her privacy disappeared, with TV interviews, chat show

appearances, magazine features, celebrity appearances all crowding into her life. Jane's husband took over the PR control with a skill that would have made Max Clifford envious.

In short, while Jane was doggedly raising her £1 million her life was not her own. For her cause she was willing to lay open most of the personal details of her illness, her pain and her self-doubt. It is telling that when, in preparation for today, our researchers asked Mike for some details on Jane's early life, the answer came back, "No, that is the only bit left that is private."

Earlier this year Jane reached her million and, in typical style, exceeded it by £150,000. She announced her wish to go back to her extended family, who have given such unstinting support. I suppose we should have guessed that you would be back. Articles in the paper over the last couple of days have reflected the delight with which Leeds people have received the news that you feel strong enough to re-enter the limelight and carry on your fund-raising. So welcome back to the limelight.

It is our good fortune that you start your latest stint in the public eye with us tonight.

We are about to bestow upon you the Freedom of the City of Leeds. With it comes our enduring admiration and our thanks and our good wishes. Thank you. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Members of Council, I now call for the vote that Jane Tomlinson MBE be made an Honorary Freeman of the City of Leeds.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

I would now like to invite Jane Tomlinson MBE to accept the role of Honorary Freeman of the City of Leeds and to make the declaration of acceptance.

JANE TOMLINSON: My Lord Mayor, I formally declare my acceptance of the role of Honorary Freeman of the City of Leeds and undertake to do all in my power to uphold the rights and dignity of the City of Leeds. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: I now invite the Chief Executive to read the Scroll of Honorary Freeman.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Mr. P. Rogerson): My Lord Mayor, "At a

Meeting of the Council of the City of Leeds held in the Council Chamber of the Civic Hall on Friday the 20th day of May 2005 at a Special Council convened for the purpose the Lord Mayor Councillor Christopher Townsley in the Chair it was resolved unanimously that under and in pursuance of the powers conferred upon the Council by s.249 of the Local Government Act of 1972 we admit Jane Tomlinson MBE to be an Honorary Freeman of the City of Leeds in recognition and high appreciation of her outstanding achievement to raise over £1 million for charity and her extraordinary feats of sporting endurance."

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to now invite Jane to come forward and sign the Roll of Honour. (The Roll was signed) (Applause)

JANE TOMLINSON: Many thanks to all in Leeds City Council for bestowing this honour on me. I have received, as you know, several awards, but this is something very special. As you know, I am not actually a Leeds lass. I was born in Wakefield and lived my first years in Liverpool across the border.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Now we know! (Laughter)

JANE TOMLINSON: After a brief time in Australia with my family in my early teens, we returned to England and it was a bit of a culture shock. We moved from Adelaide in the early summer to Leeds and Leek Street Flats in Hunslet in early November. My first memories of Leeds are of Mischief Night at Leek Street Flats. I can't go into that, (Laughter) it is indescribable.

So the last 15 years or so I have lived in Leeds. You know, I have been part of Leeds society for nearly two and a half decades. I have seen the City and it has changed so completely that it is barely recognisable from the days when I first arrived in Leeds. There is a picture taken of Luke and I cycling into Leeds through Leeds City Square. We had cycled through Italy, through France. We had seen some spectacular cities through our way, and I have to say that that picture of Leeds on a sunny day wasn't any less remarkable than all of the places we had been through. It looked a cosmopolitan city, a city to be proud of.

The transformation has been so incredible, you only have to travel down to the canal, to the river, to see how much of

the City has been regenerated. Travelling into Leeds under the Dark Arches, as they are known, they were places that people didn't venture to before. You now see whole crowds of people moving through those areas out of the City to work. That is how much the City has changed.

I only hope that in the next few years the City continues to attract investment and the environment is improved further.

I think we all recognise how lucky we are to live in Leeds for the leisure facilities, the arts, the culture, and we can only hope this expands further.

It wouldn't be right not to pay tribute to the Oncology team in Leeds that have treated me over the last 5 years. I am here because of advances in treatment. It is not just down to courage. I have endured some difficult treatments and been aided through that by the Oncology team at St. James's in particular.

We are very lucky in Leeds to have the standard of care we have, and I hope that with the opening of the new Oncology Hospital that will continue to improve.

My professional career is spent as a paediatric radiographer. Part of what we do in the fund-raising is to acknowledge that illnesses don't just affect the patient, they affect the whole of the family, and that is reflected in the charities we have chosen and the reason why we have chosen them.

There have been moves ever since I started as a paediatric radiographer to hope to build a Children's Hospital in Leeds.

I think as a City we deserve that. We have such excellent teams working to improve and help the children within Leeds and the surrounding areas that we can only hope to attract more talent and more skills into the area if we have that facility here.

Finally, thanks to the people of Yorkshire for all their support, the people of Leeds for all their help. The response has been overwhelming and very humbling. We have passed the £1 million mark, but that was only a milestone. The charities still need funding. There is still a lot of work to be done and my hope is that in the future we can be more successful than in the past.

I am so honoured to accept this honour. My heart is in Leeds. It always will be. Thank you. (Applause and standing ovation)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Just before I close the Meeting, I did say I would just like to add a few of my own words.

I am particularly honoured that this ceremony, which will be one of the last ones I shall undertake during my term as Lord Mayor, has actually taken place before I hand the chains over next Monday.

My colleagues really have said it all. You are an inspiration. I can't think of any other word. Everybody has used the word; it is absolutely fitting and right. Your courage and determination sets you above many. You are a wonderful example for the rest of us to follow. When most of us feel ill or exhausted, the easiest thing in the world is to feel sorry for ourselves, complain and let others know. You may on occasions feel the same, but you never appear to do. What you seem to do is you brush it to one side, get on with it, scheming some other way of being able to raise money and awareness of your charities.

You obviously have wonderful support from Mike and the rest of your family. Jane, it is a pleasure to be able to share in this ceremony with you today. In a few minutes time we will be able to enjoy the rest of the evening when we move through to the Banqueting Suite, and I think with that, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to declare this meeting closed. Thank you. (Applause)

(Council rose at 6.45 p.m.)