

Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen

The Local Government Act 1972 gives principal councils the power to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' on persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the council as past members of that council, but who are no longer members of the council. The act does not specify how eminent services are defined, and this is left as a matter of local interpretation. The criteria to be used to select Honorary Aldermen for appointment at Maidstone Borough Council are:

- The title of Honorary Alderman can only be conferred to a past member of this authority.
- Honorary Aldermen must have served 16 years in total, in aggregate, on the Council. When aggregating terms, the same principle will be used when determining precedence as for the Mayoralty, ie if there is a break of not more than four years between terms the service can be aggregated.
- An Honorary Alderman must have demonstrated an exemplary contribution to the Borough during their time served as a Councillor.

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen

Appointments of Honorary Aldermen must take place at a Council meeting specially convened for the purpose. The meeting can occur on the same date of another full council meeting. The nomination will be proposed and seconded. Two thirds of the members present at the meeting must vote in favour of a resolution for the nominee to be appointed as an Honorary Alderman.

An Honorary Alderman will be presented with a certificate confirming the title by the Mayor at the next Council meeting and will be given an opportunity to speak.

The name of the Honorary Alderman will be placed on an honours board in the Town Hall. If more than one Honorary Alderman is appointed at the same time, the names on the board should be ordered by length of service. If more than one Honorary Alderman is appointed with the same length of service then they should be ordered alphabetically.

Honorary Aldermen cannot be appointed posthumously.

Rights & Responsibilities of Honorary Aldermen

The title of Honorary Alderman does not confer any special privileges or rights upon the appointee to speak or vote at Council meetings, beyond the rights and privileges already afforded to the public. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that:

- (i) Whilst an honorary alderman may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Council may from time to time decide, they shall not, as such, have the right

- to attend meetings of the Council or a committee of the Council in any capacity other than as a member of the public; or
- to receive any allowances or other payments as are payable to councillors.

(ii) No honorary alderman shall, while serving as a councillor, be entitled to be addressed as honorary alderman or to attend or take part in any civic ceremonies of the council as an honorary alderman.

The only rights that are conferred to an Honorary Alderman by virtue of their appointment is to be invited to Civic functions and events by invitation of the Council. The Council will decide which Civic functions and events it is appropriate to invite Honorary Aldermen to. An Honorary Alderman has parity of status with a past Mayor and as such will be invited to the same civic functions and events.

The role of Honorary Alderman is an honorary one, but to the public an Honorary Alderman is perceived to be a representative of the Council. In taking up this role all Honorary Aldermen must agree and adhere to the protocol laid down by this Council. There are two key elements:

- 1) That the person becoming Alderman does so in the full knowledge that they are perceived to be representative of the civic element of the Council and must act to the highest standards.
- 2) In taking this role, the Alderman becomes apolitical in public; knowing that any views expressed may be interpreted as views of the Council. Aldermen are not to speak on behalf of the Council in any way whatever.

Past Mayors

Past Mayors are not eligible to become Honorary Aldermen, as past Mayors are already invited to Civic Functions and Events, already have their name on an honours board and are presented with a badge of office at the end of their mayoral year. As granting the title of Honorary Alderman would not grant any additional privileges to past Mayors it is unnecessary for them to be both past Mayors and Honorary Aldermen.

Removal of Title of Honorary Alderman

There may be occasions where, due to the past or future behaviour of individuals who have been appointed as Honorary Aldermen, the Council may wish to remove the title of Honorary Alderman from an individual in order to protect the reputation of the Council.

Removal of the title of Honorary Alderman will follow the same process as appointment (proposed and seconded, and then a resolution of two thirds of those present must be passed). However, it may take place at any meeting of Full Council rather than a specially convened meeting.