

Honorary Aldermen

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	Angela Woodhouse; Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sam Bailey
Classification	Public
Wards affected	None

Executive Summary

This report sets out the legal powers that the Council has for appointing Honorary Aldermen, as well as a suggested selection framework.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the protocol for appointing Honorary Aldermen (Appendix 1) is agreed.
2. That Council is recommended to add the protocol for appointing honorary aldermen to the constitution.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy Committee	14 March 2018
Council	11 April 2018

Honorary Aldermen

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Councillor Harper requested that the issue of whether the Council wishes to introduce the appointment of Honorary Aldermen to its Constitution be added to the work programme of the Democracy Committee in December 2017. This report sets out the legal basis of the Council introducing this, as well as a suggested framework for appointing Honorary Aldermen (Appendix 1 to this report).
- 1.2 Councillor Harper has made the following statement in favour of appointing Honorary Aldermen:

'In an era where public service is no longer celebrated such a measure would reflect the Council's and Community's gratitude of the work carried out on behalf of their community and the whole borough of individual councillors irrespective of political allegiance.'

Legal Framework

- 1.3 The Local Government Act 1972 gives principal councils the power to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' (or 'Honorary Alderwoman') 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 title can only be conferred on individuals who are no longer members of the authority.
- 1.4 The legislation states that the Council must pass a resolution, supported by two thirds of the members present, at a meeting specially convened for the purpose of appointing Honorary Aldermen.
- 1.5 The Local Government Act 1972 does not specify the criteria that should be used for nominating Honorary Aldermen, this is a matter of local choice.
- 1.6 An Honorary Alderman may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies and events as the Council decides, but the title does not confer rights to attend meetings of the council or receive allowances or other such payments.

Practical Considerations

- 1.7 Councils that appoint Honorary Aldermen will often record the names of the appointment on to an honours board. There is no further room in the Council Chamber for another honours board, therefore the Committee will need to consider whether an alternative location for an honours board could be considered. A possible location for an honours board could be the Beauvais Room, adjacent to the Council Chamber.

- 1.8 Councillor Harper has suggested that an Honorary Alderman could be presented with a framed certificate to commemorate the occasion, and that they could be invited to speak in response to the vote conferring them of the status of Honorary Alderman.
- 1.9 Councillor Harper has suggested that the meeting conferring the status of Honorary Alderman could be held before/after the Council's AGM/Mayor Making meeting. This is not recommended, as space at this meeting is already at a premium at this meeting due to invited guests of the Mayor as well as ex Mayors attending. Time is also at a premium if the Civic Parade is happening after the AGM. Instead it is recommended that a special meeting be held before the first Full Council meeting of the municipal year following the AGM. This would allow friends, family and wellwishers of the proposed Aldermen to attend the meeting to witness the conferring the honorary title.

Selection Criteria

- 1.10 As mentioned in paragraph 1.5, selection criteria is a matter of local choice. However Councillor Harper has suggested that the criteria should be any Councillor that has served two full terms, however these terms need not be consecutive.
- 1.11 However some further criteria need to be considered by the Committee. The first is whether the recommendation to appoint as Honorary Alderman is automatic on completion of the requisite term of office, or whether it should be by nomination. If the recommendation is automatic, it could lead to a large number of ex Councillors becoming Honorary Aldermen. There are three reasons why this would not be advised. The first is that it would increase the invitation list significantly for Civic Events for which Honorary Aldermen are invited, increasing administration and catering costs. The second would be that having a large number of Honorary Aldermen may be seen as devaluing the title. Finally, automatic recommendation may increase the likelihood that a Councillor nominated to become an Honorary Alderman automatically might not pass the two thirds majority in the special meeting to confer the title. It is therefore recommended that Honorary Aldermen be recommended for appointment by five serving Councillors.
- 1.12 If the criteria is made more stringent (some Councils have stated that Honorary Alderman must have served at least 20 years on the Council) then automatic appointment may be appropriate.
- 1.13 The Committee should consider not allowing former Mayors to be appointed as Aldermen. This is due to the fact that former Mayors are already invited to Civic events, have their names on the honours board of the Council chamber and receive a badge of office. It is recommended that members that have already served as Mayor be excluded from becoming Aldermen for this reason. If a Councillor who has already been appointed as an Honorary Alderman returns to the Council and then is appointed Mayor they can retain the title of Honorary Alderman.
- 1.14 It is recommended that there is also provision for removal of the title of Honorary Alderman once it has been conferred. It is important to ensure

there is a mechanism to remove this title if an appointee's future (or past) conduct is found to bring the title of Honorary Alderman into disrepute so that the Council feels it should end their association with this person. The same criteria should be used for recommendation of Honorary Alderman (request of 5 current Councillors) and the same majority needed to remove the title as to confer the title (two thirds of those present). However a special Council meeting would not be required to consider the removal of the title of Honorary Alderman.

- 1.15 On the basis of the content of this report, a draft Protocol for the Selection of Honorary Aldermen is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The Committee may wish to make amendments, as appropriate. If the Committee agrees the protocol then it will be recommended to Council so that it can be included in the Constitution. The most appropriate location for this protocol would be in Section 4, after the protocol guide for selection of the Mayor.
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2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Committee could decide to recommend to Council a protocol for selecting Honorary Aldermen (contained in Appendix 1). The protocol can be amended by the Committee.
 - 2.2 The Committee council decide not to recommend to Council a protocol for selecting Honorary Aldermen.
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3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The option outlined in 2.1 is the preferred option, as it is a cost effective way of recognising Councillors who have provided service to the Borough.
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4. RISK

- 4.1 Either accepting or rejecting the recommendations will not have any material effect on the Council's risk appetite. The provision of a mechanism to remove the title of Honorary Alderman would mitigate the risk to the Council of subsequent poor conduct of Honorary Alderman bringing the Council's name into disrepute. There is a risk that there would still be reputational damage as the removal of the title could generate negative publicity in its own right. However this would have to be carefully considered by the members involved in requesting the removal of this title.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 This report has been drafted at the request of Councillor Harper, and he provided some suggested criteria and an argument in favour of introducing Honorary Aldermen
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If agreed, the protocol contained in Appendix 1 will be recommended to Council for adoption as part of the Constitution at the Council meeting on 11 April 2018.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Risk Management	See paragraph 4.1	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Financial	There is a small financial implication for producing a certificate, ordering a new Honours Board and signwriting for entering new names on the board. This can be met through the existing Civic Events budget. There will also be a financial implication for inviting Honorary Aldermen to civic events, both financially (e.g. increase in Catering costs) and administratively.	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Staffing	No implications	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Legal	The Council may, by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose, confer the title of Honorary Aldermen under	Keith Trowell, Interim Team Leader (Corporate Governance)

	Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 on persons who have rendered eminent services to the Council as past members, but who are not currently members of the Council. The Act does not contain any statutory provision for the removal of the title.	
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications.	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Equalities	No implications	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	No implications	Democratic and Administration Services Manager
Procurement	No implications	Democratic and Administration Services Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Protocol on Conferring the Title of Honorary Aldermen to Ex-Members of the Authority

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None