

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen – Agreement of Criteria and Privileges

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1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval for the criteria and procedure to appoint Honorary Aldermen and to extend their civic rights.

2. Public Interest

The title of Honorary Alderman can be conferred 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 not then Councillors of the Council. The position of Honorary Alderman is non-political and the title is nominated and agreed by a majority of their fellow Councillors.

3. Recommendation

That Council:-

- a) Review and agree the criteria for appointing Honorary Aldermen of the Council as listed in paragraph 6 and agree to hold a Special meeting in September 2015 to make the appointments.
- b) Agree to extend the privileges of Honorary Aldermen as listed in paragraph 7.

4. Background

Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states "that a principal 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 with notice of the object, 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 not then members of the Council."

There is no statutory guidance or definition of "eminent services" although it is recommended that each Council should have its own criteria for the appointment. Bearing in mind the current local government review, arrangements would be looked at in respect of the position and status of such a designation should there be a change to the existing council structures in South Somerset. In deciding whether "eminent services" have been provided by a councillor, services by a councillor to a predecessor Authority can be taken into account.

The current criteria for appointment was agreed in July 2007 and it is appropriate that that it is reviewed again prior to any appointments to be made in 2015.

5. Report

This report was discussed at the District Executive meeting on 2nd July and it was agreed to exclude four of the proposed rights of Aldermen for the following reasons:-

- Use of the Members Room at Brympton Way offices – lack of existing meeting space and not appropriate to have swipe card building access.
- Annual parking permit and £100 Octagon Theatre gift voucher – cost not justified.
- Representation of Chairman or Vice-Chairman at civic events – not appropriate and should be either the Leader or a serving District Councillor.

The removal of these privileges was unanimously agreed by District Executive.

6. Criteria for Aldermen

The proposed criteria for conferring the title honorary alderman is recommended as follows:

- (a) the title would be conferred on persons who have, in the opinion of the District Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past members, but who are no longer serving councillors.
- (b) Nominees would have a minimum period of 12 years past service as a Councillor of the District Council.
- (c) Nominations would have to receive the support of not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a Special meeting of the Council convened for the purpose.
- (d) Nominations can be made by any Party Group Leader. However, before proceeding, officers and members would, via the party groups, establish whether or not the nomination would be likely to receive sufficient support to proceed, as per criteria (c) above.

(In exceptional cases the Council may agree to waive paragraph (b) above)

7. Privileges of Honorary Aldermen

Honorary Aldermen have no 'legal or social precedence' but it is custom and practice that they are invited to all Civic ceremonial events. Historically, this has meant an invitation to the annual Chairman's Civic Reception, however, it is now proposed to extend this to:-

- invitation to the Chairman's Civic Reception
- invitation to any future appointment of Honorary Aldermen.
- a commemorative badge to be worn at Civic Events
- a framed commemorative certificate
- invitation to SSSDC events such as opening ceremonies or presentation evenings (i.e. All Star Awards and opening of new facilities)

The Aldermen have no right to attend meetings of the Council or its committees or to receive any allowances or payments to which serving councillors are entitled.

8. Proposed Arrangements for Appointment

If agreed, then arrangements will be made for a special Council meeting to be held in September on the same date as the ordinary meeting that month. Prior to that meeting nominations will be sought and agreed with Group Leaders.

9. Financial Implications

The costs involved in this proposal will be the costs of a commemorative medal or insignia and the cost of any invitation taken up by appointed Aldermen to attend civic events. Their names would also be displayed on the Board of Honour in the Council Chamber. These costs can be met from within existing Legal and Democratic Services budgets.

10. Implications for Corporate Priorities

None.

11. Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

All councillors are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and we are determined to ensure that councillors receive fair and equitable treatment.

13. Privacy Impact Assessment

No implications.

14. Background Papers

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen report to Council – July 2007

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen report to Council – September 2011

Minutes of District Executive – July 2015
