

By: Alex King – Deputy Leader
Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services

To: Selection and Member Services – 13 July 2011

Subject: Honorary Freemen

Summary: This report invites the Committee to recommend to the County Council to consider whether it wishes to utilise powers under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, to confer the award of Honorary Freemen to persons of distinction as described in this report and to delegate authority to the Deputy Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Leaders of the other two political groups, to formulate and agree the criteria for such awards.

- (1) At its meeting on 30 April 2009, the County Council resolved to utilise the power contained in Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, to confer the award of Honorary Alderman to recognise the eminent services of some of its distinguished former Members (see previous report at **Appendix 1**). There is no statutory definition of “eminent services” but the County Council agreed that the award should only be made to former Members who had served at least 12 years and had rendered eminent services in terms of the individual’s contribution to the activities of the County Council and the well-being of the County of Kent. Nominations are made to the County Council by the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Leaders of the two Opposition Groups.
- (2) Honorary Aldermen are invited to attend relevant civic and ceremonial events, including the Annual Meeting of the Council and the Chairman’s Civic Reception. The names of those individuals awarded the status of Honorary Alderman are also be included on the wooden honours board in the Council Chamber.
- (3) Since the County Council resolved to utilise this power, thirteen distinguished former Members have been admitted as Honorary Aldermen by the County Council:

Mr Terry Birkett
Dr S J Cox
Mrs Joyce Esterson
Mr J Frisby
Dr Frank Fox
Mr Frank Gibson OBE
Lord Kingsdown KG PC
Mr Peter Morgan
Mr R H B Neame, CBE
Mr W Newman, DL
Mr J A Spence
Mrs Allison Wainman OBE
Mr Fred Wood-Brignall

- (4) The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 has made two important changes to legislation on Honorary titles:
1. Local Authorities may now also award the title of “Honorary Alderwoman”
 2. Local Authorities may now also award the title of “Honorary Freeman” and “Honorary Freewoman” to “persons of distinction”, who have, rendered eminent services to the local authority “place or area”. This means that the title may be given to individuals who have not served as local authority Members.

Recommendation:

(5) The Committee is invited to agree to recommend to the County Council, that the principle of awarding the title of Honorary Freeman to persons of distinction be introduced as described in paragraph 4 above and ask the County Council to delegate authority to the Deputy Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Leaders of the other two political groups, to formulate and agree the criteria for such awards.

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
01622 694002
peter.sass@kent.gov.uk

By: Alex King, Deputy Leader
Geoff Wild - Director of Law and Governance

Appendix 1

To: County Council – 30 April 2009

Subject: Appointment of Honorary Aldermen

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report invites the County Council to approve the procedure and criteria to appoint Honorary Aldermen.

FOR DECISION

Background

1) At a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee on 8 October 2008, consideration was given to a proposal to allow the County Council to bestow an Office of Dignity upon individuals. The Committee was advised that the only statutory Office of Dignity that can be awarded by an English County Council is that of Honorary Alderman. The Committee was advised that, under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 “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.”

Criteria for the Award

2) At its meeting on 23 January 2009, the Committee was advised that there is no statutory guidance on the definition of “eminent services”, although it is recommended that each Council should develop its own criteria. Accordingly, the following criteria are recommended to the County Council for approval:

- The title may be conferred on persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past Members, but who are no longer serving Members;
- There shall be no specific definition of “eminent services”, it being left to the discretion of the Council at the time to assess and recognise any individual’s contribution to the activities of the Council and the wellbeing of the county of Kent;
- Nominees would normally require a minimum period of 12 years past service as a Member of the Council;
- In accordance with Section 249 of the 1972 Act, nominees would have to receive the support of not less than two-thirds of the Members voting thereon at a special Council meeting convened for the purpose;
- Nominations can be made by any Group Leader. However, before proceeding, officers and Members should, via the party groups, establish whether or not the nomination would be likely to receive sufficient support to proceed;

- Honorary Aldermen should be invited to attend relevant civic and ceremonial events, including the Annual Council meeting, the Chairman's Civic Reception, and any future appointment of Honorary Aldermen;
- The status of Honorary Alderman carries no special right to attend or address meetings of the Council or its Committees or to receive any allowances or payments to which serving Members are entitled. However, at the discretion of the Chairman, a nominee for Honorary Alderman may (if present) be invited to respond to the vote conferring that status;

3) Should the County Council agree both the principle of awarding the status of Honorary Alderman and the criteria suggested by the Selection and Member Services Committee listed above, it is suggested that a meeting of the County Council be arranged after the County Council elections in June, in consultation with the Chairman of the County Council, to determine the nominations made by any Group Leader as to the award of the status of Honorary Alderman. It is also proposed that the names of Honorary Alderman would appear on a suitable wooden board in the Council Chamber, as already exists for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the County Council.

Recommendation

4) Members are invited to approve the criteria for appointing Honorary Aldermen of the Council, as set out in paragraph 2) above.

Alex King – Deputy Leader
01622 694122
alex.king@kent.gov.uk

Geoff Wild
Director of Law and Governance
01622 694302
geoff.wild@kent.gov.uk