

By: Alex King - Deputy Leader  
Peter Homewood – Chairman of the Committee  
Peter Sass - Head of Democratic Services

To: Selection & Member Services Committee – Monday 12 September 2011

Subject: Honorary Freeman

Classification            Unrestricted

#### FOR DECISION

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1. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, allows the Council to confer the titles of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman and Honorary Freeman or Freewoman. Honorary Aldermen have to have been serving County Councillors, whereas Honorary Freemen do not have to have been elected Members.

2. The County Council agreed on 30 April 2009 and 21 July 2011 to utilise the powers contained in section 249 of the 1972 Act. Together with the Kent Invicta Award, these honorary awards comprise part of a suite of awards and appointments that the County Council may choose to make to individuals to recognise eminent services.

3. The following criteria have already been agreed for Honorary Aldermen:

- 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;
- Nominees 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 should establish with the Members, via their party groups, whether or not the nomination would be likely to receive support;
- 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 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;

### Honorary Freemen

4. As indicated above, the Local Government Act 1972 has now been amended to allow local authorities to confer the award of Honorary Freemen 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. At its meeting on 21 July 2011, the County Council approved the principle of awarding the title of Honorary Freeman to persons of distinction and delegated authority to the Leader, Deputy Leader of the Council and the two Opposition Group Leaders to formulate and agree the criteria for such awards.

During August, Group Leaders were consulted on the proposed criteria, which are set out below:

- The title may be conferred on persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the County of Kent, whether or not they have been elected Members of the Authority;
- 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 and the wellbeing of the county of Kent. This may result from an extended period of public or charitable service for or on behalf of the Council or the County of Kent, or alternatively, the result of a single, highly prestigious achievement, such as winning an Olympic medal, Nobel Prize or other national or international prize/award.
- Nominees 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 should establish with the Members, via their party groups, whether or not the nomination would be likely to receive support;
- Honorary Freemen 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 Freemen;
- The status of Honorary Freeman 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 Freeman may (if present) be invited to respond to the vote conferring that status.

**Recommendation:**

The Committee is invited approve the criteria for the award of Honorary Freeman as set out in paragraph 4 above.

Peter Sass: Head of Democratic Services

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