

By: Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership
To: Kent County Council – 10 December 2009
Subject: Honorary Aldermen

- (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**). This is the first time that the County Council has exercised its power under the Act to confer these awards. The County Council was informed that there was no statutory definition of “eminent services” but 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.
- (2) It is proposed that Honorary Aldermen should be 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 Aldermen will also be included on a suitable wooden honours board, similar to those that already exist in the Council Chamber for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the County Council.
- (3) The three Group Leaders have met to discuss potential recipients of this Honorary Award and the following nominations are made:
 - a. Mr Terry Birkett: who was elected to serve as the Labour Member for the Deal West Division from 1982 to 2009. From 1993 until 2005, he was Chief Whip of the Labour Group and in recent years was the Shadow Cabinet Member for Personnel and latterly Regeneration and Environment. His KCC service included practically every Committee.
 - b. Mrs Joyce Esterson: who was elected to serve as the Labour Member for the Gravesend East Division from 1985 until 2001. She was the co-chair of the former Education Committee from 1993 to 1997. In 1993, Mrs Esterson was a major influence in the development of nursery units. She was also the Labour Group Secretary during the 1990s.
 - c. Dr Frank Fox: who served as the Conservative Member for Birchington and the Parishes from 1973 until 2005. He was Vice Chairman of the County Council from 1997 to 1999 and Chairman of the County Council from 1999 to 2000.
 - d. Mr Frank Gibson OBE: who was elected as the Conservative Member for the Gravesham Rural Electoral Division from 1986 until 2005. He was Vice Chairman of the County Council in 2002/2003 and became Chairman of the County Council from 2003 to 2004.
 - e. Lord Kingsdown KG PC: who was elected to the County Council in 1961 as the Conservative Member for the Hollingbourne No.2 Division and served until 1977. He was Chairman of the old County Council in 1972 and of the new County Council from 1973 to 1975. He was also the Leader of the Conservative Group. Lord Kingsdown was a former Governor of the Bank of England and Lord Lieutenant of Kent.

- f. Mr Peter Morgan: who served as the Liberal Democrat Member for Swale Central. He was elected to the County Council in 1990, retiring in 2005. Mr Morgan was Vice Chairman of the County Council in 1994/95 and Chairman in 1996/97. Along with Sir John Grugeon, Mr Morgan was the co-author of the "Guide to County Hall" and continues to show parties round County Hall.
 - g. Mrs Alison Wainman OBE: who served as the Liberal Democrat Member for Maidstone West and was first elected in 1981. From May 1993 until July 1997, Mrs Wainman was Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and, therefore, joint Leader of the County Council from 1993 to 1997. In the 2002 New Year's Honours List, Mrs Wainman was awarded the OBE for her services to Local Government
 - h. Mr Fred Wood-Brignall: who was elected to the County Council in 1997 as the Conservative Member for Romney Marsh and served until 2009. Mr Wood-Brignall was Vice Chairman of the County Council from 2005 to 2006 and became Chairman of the County Council from 2006 to 2007.
- (4) Members are reminded that, in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the nominees for Honorary Aldermen have to receive the support of not less than two thirds of the Members voting thereon at a special meeting of the County Council convened for the purpose.

Recommendation:

- (5) The County Council is invited to consider the eight nominations for the award of Honorary Alderman of Kent County Council, as described above.

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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.

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