

# Crawley Borough Council

	Report No:DS/68	<b>E</b>
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## Report to General Purposes Committee

29 January 2007

### Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Freemen

#### 1. Key Points

- 1.1 The Council may appoint Honorary Aldermen or Honorary Freemen as a way of honouring people who have given exceptional service to the borough. In the case of honorary alderman that service must be as a past member of the authority.
- 1.2 This report proposes the criteria and procedure by which consideration will be given to honouring someone in this way.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Council be recommended to agree that the criteria and procedure set out in paragraph 4 below will be followed in considering whether or not to confer the title of honorary alderman or honorary freeman on appropriate individuals.

**PAT TINSLEY**  
Head of Democratic Services

**COUNCILLOR DUNCAN CROW**  
Vice-Chair of the Executive

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 There have been some informal discussions over the past few years (at the Members' Facilities Working Group and also at The Leader's Briefing meeting under the previous Labour Administration and more recently at the Executive Briefing meeting under the current administration) about the possibility of formalising a mechanism for honouring those who have given exceptional service to the local community. Two such honours are those of Honorary Alderman and Honorary Freeman.
- 3.2 The conferring of both of these titles are covered by Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 3.3 In the case of Honorary Alderman the title may be conferred upon-
- "persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past members of that Council but are not then Councillors of the Council"*
- 3.4 An Honorary Alderman may attend and take part in civic events but does not have the right to attend Council or Committee meetings or claim allowances. If a former member becomes an honorary alderman and is subsequently re-elected to the Council, he/she is not entitled to be addressed as alderman or attend any civic functions as an alderman whilst he/she remains a councillor.
- 3.5 In the case of Honorary Freeman the title may be conferred upon-
- "persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough"*
- 3.6 In both cases, the resolution to confer either of the above titles must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the Council at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council convened specifically for that purpose.

### **4. Proposed Criteria and Method of Nomination**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the following should be taken into account when deciding to nominate someone for either title:-

#### **4.1.1 Honorary Alderman**

Nominees should be former councillors and who have served in that capacity for a significant time. Rather than define a specific period of service it is suggested that the length of service would normally be substantially greater than the average length of service per councillor at that time.

Nominees should also have given service to the wider community in a role outside of their duties as a Borough Councillor. This may include notable work with the Voluntary Sector, with Educational Bodies, with other Local Authorities covering the geographical area of the Borough, or any other body that the Council shall deem appropriate.

#### **4.1.2. Honorary Freeman**

Nominees should be either individuals that have given extraordinary service to the Town over a prolonged period, or who, by their action, have brought significant distinction to the Town.

- 4.2 It is important not to devalue these honours by giving them too frequently. Many people provide good service both to the town and to the Council. It should not be expected that retiring Councillors of many years service would automatically receive an honour. They should be to reward exceptional service.

#### **Method of Nomination**

- 4.3 Clearly it would not be appropriate for there to be any public disagreement at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council as to whether or not an honour should be conferred on any particular individual. Therefore it would be important to ensure, as far as possible, prior to that stage, that any nomination made would receive the full support of the whole Council.
- 4.4 It is therefore proposed that if anyone considers that a particular individual should be considered for either honour, they should approach the Head of Democratic Services who will then consult with the Mayor and the Leaders of each of the political groups. If the Head of Democratic Services is satisfied that the person nominated is likely to receive the support of the whole Council, he/she will report the matter to the General Purposes Committee who would be expected to recommend the Mayor to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council for that purpose.
- 4.5 The Head of Democratic Services will also be responsible for approaching the person nominated to ensure that he / she would like to receive such an honour, before any formal arrangements are made.

### **5 Staffing, Financial and Legal Implications/Powers**

- 5.1 The power to confer the titles of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Freeman is contained in Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. This statutory provision also empowers the Council to spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person upon whom it has conferred the title. As the honour is likely to be bestowed infrequently, the modest cost of doing so will be able to be contained within existing budgets.
- 5.2 There may be some recently deceased persons who might otherwise have been considered for one or other of these honours, but unfortunately there is no power for the Council to confer either title posthumously. In such cases the Council may need to consider other ways of honouring the persons concerned such as by the naming of a building, a street or a public facility.

## **6 Background Papers**

Report by Councillor Robert Hull to Members' Facilities Working Group

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