

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen / Alderwomen

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report recommends that the Council adopts a policy for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen as a way of honouring ex-councillors who have given long and distinguished service to Somerset and its residents. Given the nature of the proposal, it would be appropriate for the Committee to make a recommendation to Full Council on this matter.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **The Committee is asked to recommend Council to approve the arrangements for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen set out in this report and to include the arrangements as an appendix to the Constitution.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Before the 2017 elections a proposal was made for a requisitioned item to be brought to the Council to propose the adoption for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen. Given the proximity of the elections and the retirement of a number of councillors it was felt more appropriate to bring this proposal forward following the elections and to the relevant committee for consideration.
- 3.2 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/alderwoman 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.”
- 3.3 The appointment of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman is an entirely honorary position, bringing no special rights, but is intended to reflect the esteem of the wider community. 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.

3.4 Proposed criteria and procedure for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen.

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

- (a) The title would be conferred on any past elected member who has, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent service to the Council and the local community, such as a past Chairman of Council, but who is no longer a serving councillor or is politically active.
- (b) Nominations for Honorary Aldermen/Alderwoman made in accordance with these arrangements at a Special meeting of the Council convened for the purpose on the rise of the November Full Council meeting.
- (c) Nominations may be received by the Chairman of the Council from any member of the Council with the support of their Group Leader and must be received in time to be brought before the Special Council meeting in the form of a requisitioned item in accordance with the Council's procedural rules. The Leader of the Council shall move the requisitioned item which shall be seconded where possible by the leader of the main opposition group. The nomination to appoint an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman shall be formally agreed if supported by not less than two thirds of the Members present.
- (d) Nominees must have a minimum period of 12 years past service as a Councillor of the County Council.
- (e) There shall be no more than twelve County Council Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman appointments at any one time.

3.5 Rights of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen

Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen have no 'legal or social precedence' but it is custom and practice that they are invited to all appropriate Civic ceremonial events. This would include the Annual Council meeting, the Chairman's Civic Reception, and other events such as any future appointment of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen. Honorary Aldermen are entitled to wear the badge of 'Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman' at Civic events within the County. The badge of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman can only be worn at Civic events outside the County with the prior agreement of the organisers of the event. Those elected to the Roll of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman are entitled to use the title of 'Honorary Alderman/Honorary Alderwoman of the County of Somerset. The Aldermen/Alderwomen have no right to receive any allowances or payments to which serving councillors are entitled.

3.6 Precedence in Civic processions:

Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen shall take precedence immediately after the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council. Precedence shall be according to number of years' service as a Member of Somerset County Council.

3.7 Presentation Ceremony

The award of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman shall take place during a meeting of the Council. Those awarded the title will be presented with: 1) A

'Certificate of Conferral of the Status of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman' which will carry the Council's Coat of Arms and the Common Seal of the Council, witnessed by the Chairman and the Chief Executive. The certificate will be framed for presentation. ii) A Silver Badge of Office similar to the past Chairman's badge, incorporating the Coat of Arms on a ribbon. The lettering on the title will say 'Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman (as appropriate)'. The badge will be presented in an official presentation box. Following the presentation, those appointed Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman will be asked to sign the 'Roll of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen'.

- 3.8** The Roll of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen shall be held and maintained by the Community Governance team. Included in the Roll of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen shall be the individual's name and title, and date of election to the Roll.
- 3.9** Following notification of the death of an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman, the County flag will be flown at half-mast over County Hall from the date of notification of death until the funeral has taken place.

4. Implications

- 4.1.** Legal & Risk: None.
- 4.2.** Impact Assessment: No implications.
- 4.3.** Financial: The only direct costs involved in this proposal will be the costs of a commemorative badge and certificate. The cost of this policy is estimated at a maximum of £1000.00 in the first year of its operation one then no more than £100.00 per year in future years.

It is expected that these costs can be contained within the existing members' budget.

- 4.4.** HR: Not applicable.

5. Background papers

- 5.1.** None

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author.