

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 14th February 2018
Report Title: Proposed Honorary Aldermen Scheme
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Portfolio Holder: Cllr. G D Clarkson
Portfolio Holder for: The Leader



Summary: In recognition of dedicated and committed service by past elected Members, the Leader of the Council has requested that Ashford Borough Council consider establishing an Honorary Alderman scheme. This report sets out proposals for how the scheme will be established in Ashford and requests that the Cabinet make appropriate recommendations to the Full Council Meeting.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Not applicable

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is asked to recommend to the Council that:-**

- (i) an Honorary Alderman Scheme for the Borough of Ashford be established for those former Councillors who have served for 12 years or more as an elected Member of ABC.**
- (ii) the rights and privileges to be afforded to Honorary Aldermen be as set out in Paragraph 7.**
- (iii) to acknowledge the contributions made by Past Mayors to the work of the Council and the community, upon ceasing to be a Member of the Council they be given the title of “Mayor Emeritus”**
- (iv) the existing Members Long Term Certificates Scheme continue to be awarded to those Members who have served serve one or two terms of office.**
- (v) the Nomination Award Criteria for Honorary Aldermen be approved as outlined in Paragraph 5 of the report.**
- (vi) the Head of Legal and Democracy in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Member**

Champion for the Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison be given delegated authority to agree the ceremonial and other matters associated with the award.

Policy Overview:	Not applicable
Financial Implications:	The estimated costs associated with the purchase of the appropriate Honorary Aldermen Badges, robes regalia and commissioning of the Honorary Alderman Board is estimated to be between £9,000 and £10,000 and can be met from the General Fund Reserve. In addition to this there would be the hosting immediately following the award which is considered could be contained within the Mayoral entertainment budget for Civic events.
Legal Implications	The establishment of an Honorary Alderman Scheme is in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.
Equalities Impact Assessment	Not Required because the criteria for bestowing the awards are equally applicable to all elected Members
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	Nil
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Report Title: Proposed Honorary Alderman Scheme

Introduction and Background

1. The Leader of the Council has requested that the Borough Council consider the establishment of an Honorary Alderman Scheme to recognise the dedicated and committed service of past elected Members of the Authority. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables a Council by resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Members at a specially convened meeting of the Council to confer the title 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 current Members of that Council. Honorary Aldermen can attend and take part in Civic Ceremonies as invited but do not have the right to attend meetings of the Council or to receive an allowance or payment for their attendance.
2. To date the Ashford Borough Council has not created any Honorary Aldermen under the 1972 legislation but has, however, granted Honorary Freedom to two individuals and to the Intelligence Corps, the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and 133 Field Company REME. In addition, in October 2018 the Council agreed to the establishment of the Honorary Ambassador of Ashford Award Scheme and the first recipient of this award was Liliana Turoiu, President of the Romanian Cultural Institute.
3. The Council also has a Members Long Service Certificate scheme which was established in 2011 and provides for those Members standing down or who have not been re-elected to receive a Certificate from the Mayor in recognition of their dedicated service. This report does not propose any changes to that scheme and certificates will continue to be awarded to those Members who serve for one or two terms.

Proposal

4. The Leader of the Council has discussed this issue with the Member Champion for the Military Covenant and Civic Ceremonial and Officers who consider that it would be appropriate to go back to the formation of the Borough Council in 1974 and those Members who have served for 12 years or more would be eligible for nomination. Up to 14 past Members would meet this criteria at the present time together with a number of eligible current members who might either choose to stand down or fail to retain their seat at the next all Borough elections in May 2019. It is also considered that this should only apply to those past Members still living and therefore there will be no posthumous awards. Nomination would not be automatic and in considering nominations careful consideration would be given to the proposed Nomination Award criteria set out in paragraph 5 below.

Nomination Award Criteria

5. Guidance suggests that each Local Authority should have its own criteria for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen, together with a list of rights and duties and its own ceremony for their admission. For Ashford, the following award criteria is considered appropriate:-

- A nominee shall be former elected Member of any political persuasion who has served for 12 years or more as an elected Member of Ashford Borough Council.
- The nominee shall be of good character, have represented their Ward in a diligent manner and have participated in the wider work and activities of the Borough Council.
- Membership of outside bodies on behalf of the Council would be taken into account.
- A good attendance record, particularly at Full Council meetings is essential together with a reasonable attendance on Committees, Boards or Groups on which the person had served.
- Other additional responsibilities will be considered as contributory factors.

Process for Consideration of Nominations

6. Former elected Members meeting the time qualification set out above will be considered by the Civic Honours and Awards Board who will in turn, having considered the criteria outlined in paragraph 5 above, make recommendations to an Extraordinary meeting of the Council. Prior to the Extraordinary meeting considering the nominations, it is suggested that the nominees be contacted to ascertain whether they would be willing to accept the Award. Subject to the proposed nominees signifying that they would accept the honour, a brief summary of the nominees' public contribution to the Borough would be produced for the Extraordinary meeting to enable elected Members of the Council to take an informed view before voting on each individual nomination. Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for the Council by resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Members at the specially convened meeting to confer the title of Honorary Alderman.

Rights and Privileges of an Honorary Alderman

7. Section 249 (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that:-

“An Honorary Alderman of a principal Council may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Council may from time to time decide, but shall not, as such have the right:-

- (a) to attend meetings of the Council or a Committee of the Council.

or

- (b) to receive any such allowances or other payments as are payable under Sections 173 to 176 of the Local Government Act 1972”.

It is of course accepted that Honorary Aldermen would still be able to attend meetings of the Council which are open to the public in their capacity as a member of the public.

8. The title of Honorary Alderman is the only privilege that Aldermanic status confers under the legislation. It is, however, suggested that the additional rights set out below be conferred on Honorary Aldermen of the Borough of Ashford:-
 - (a) to attend Civic events organised by the Council and to wear their heraldic badge.
 - (b) to attend the Borough Council’s Civic Service and Remembrance Sunday commemoration services as part of the “Honorary Aldermanic Group”.
 - (c) to have the Council’s Borough flag flown at half-mast upon their death.

Former and Current Mayors of the Borough

9. There are 12 Past Mayors (who are also former Councillors) and two existing Members who have held that position. It is suggested that former Mayors of the Borough having already held the Civic role as “First Citizen” will, on ceasing to be Members of the Authority, be given the title of “Mayor Emeritus”. This is subject to having held the Civic Office of Mayor for at least one full year and having discharged those Civic duties in a fitting and diligent manner. The title, for Past Mayors, whilst still serving as elected Members will not be used as part of the general day to day business of the Council. Past Mayors are already honoured by having their photographs displayed in the corridor adjacent to the Mayor’s Parlour and their names are recorded on a dedicated board of Past Mayors which also shows their periods of office.

Proposed Ceremonial Arrangements for the Award

10. Following the Extraordinary Council meeting, individual Ex-Councillors will be informed of the Council’s decision and be invited to attend a ceremony which will take place following the conclusion of a subsequent Ordinary Council meeting. The recipient will be able to bring a restricted number of guests to the ceremony. It is proposed that the Award of Honorary Alderman will only take place once every four years following the all Borough Council elections. It is therefore anticipated that following the elections the Civic Honours and Awards Board would meet to consider nominations and make recommendations to an Extraordinary Council meeting which will be arranged to follow the Ordinary Council meeting planned for July of that year. It is therefore suggested, the Awards Ceremony take place following the conclusion of the next Ordinary Council meeting to be held in October of that year. The award of Member Long Service Certificates will also take place at the same meeting prior to the Honorary Alderman Ceremony.

11. The ceremony will take place in the Council Chamber and will be conducted by the Worshipful the Mayor assisted by the Chief Executive and the Member Champion for Ceremonial Liaison. Upon instructions from the Mayor the Member Champion for Ceremonial Liaison will read out the Award citation and recipients would come up one at a time to receive their Award and to be robed as an Alderman of the Borough. The Chief Executive will ask the proposed recipient whether they would accept this honour and the recipient would then sign the Honorary Alderman register. The Mace Bearer will then robe the recipient with the Aldermanic gown who will then approach the Mayor to be presented with the Aldermanic Collarette and Honorary Alderman badge and presented with a rolled scroll of the citation. They will then be seated in an area to one side of the Council Chamber when the the gown would be removed for use by one of the subsequent recipients. Following the award ceremony for the Honorary Alderman, the Mayor will invite all those present to attend a reception which would be held in the Committee rooms.

Future Civic Role Honorary of Alderman and Mayor Emeritus

12. It is proposed that collectively the Honorary Aldermen shall be known as the "Honorary Aldermanic Group" and the Mayor Emeritus shall be known as the "Civic Emeritus Mayoralty". As part of the ceremony outlined above and for use in the future, the Council will purchase two sets of academic gowns, one set in green for use by the Aldermanic Group and one set in red for the use by Civic Emeritus Mayoralty. The red and green colours are in keeping with the colours on the Council's armorial bearings and they will remain the property of the Council. It is proposed that the green gowns will be used in the robing ceremony for the Honorary Aldermen and subsequently used by two volunteer Honorary Aldermen to represent the Honorary Aldermanic Group at the Annual Civic Church Service and the Annual Service of Remembrance and other appropriate Civic occasions. The red gowns would be used by two Emeritus Mayors to represent the Emeritus Mayoralty of the Borough at the Annual Civic Service and the Remembrance Sunday service and other Civic occasions. The proposed Aldermanic Collarette and Heraldic Badge should be of a design to match the current badge which is currently given to Past Mayors at the end of their mayoral year.
13. During the development of the proposed scheme and the suggested purchase of academic gowns it became apparent that there was a need to consider commissioning of a gown to be worn by the Deputy Mayor on such Civic Events referred to above. The cost of such provision is therefore set out in the financial implications section below.

Financial Implications

14. Section 249 (6) of the 1972 Act allows Councils to spend a "reasonable sum" on the presentation of an address to the Honorary Alderman. Other Council's provide Honorary Aldermen with special badges or jewels similar to those worn by former Mayors and Chairmen. The proposed arrangements outlined within this report are therefore in accordance with practice adopted by other authorities throughout the country.

15. An estimate of the cost of the items of regalia is set out below and may fluctuate depending upon the exact specification agreed as the Council moves towards the actual Award Ceremony.

	£
• Alderman badges - £300 per badge x 14	= 4,200.00
• Eight ceremonial gowns at £100 each	= 800.00
• Eight Aldermanic collarettes at £50 each	= 400.00
• Robe for Deputy Mayor	= 1,200.00
• Commissioning of Roll of Honorary Aldermen Board	= 1,500.00
• Sign writing to record the names of the Honorary Aldermen	= 800.00
• Register of Honorary Aldermen	= 150.00
Total	9,050.00

The above estimate will cater for the ceremony for 2019, however there will be no further expenditure until 2023 when the cost will be significantly less as it would only need to cover the cost of individual badges and the signwriting on the Roll of Honorary Aldermen Board. As mentioned previously, it is considered that the cost of the reception afterward the ceremony can be contained within the existing Mayoral budget for Civic events.

Next Steps in Process

16. Subject to approval of the Cabinet's recommendation by Council in February 2019, Officers will commission the required regalia, gowns and arrange for the production of a Roll of Honorary Alderman Board. It is suggested that the finalisation of the arrangements associated with this and other ceremonial matters be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democracy in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Member Champion of Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison and this is reflected as a distinct recommendation within this report.

Conclusion

17. It is believed that the introduction of this Civic recognition gives an added dignity and Civic dimension which endorses and supports the history and heritage of the Borough.

Portfolio Holder's Views

18. The Portfolio Holder is the Leader of the Council and he is supportive of the proposals outlined within this report.

Contact and Email

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