

Documents which support the Constitution

Part L

Protocol for the appointment and role of Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen

1. Procedure for nomination and appointment

- 1.1 The Council may, in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the provisions of this protocol, admit a person of distinction as an honorary freeman of the borough in recognition of their eminent services to the borough; or confer the title of honorary alderman upon a past member of the Council in recognition of their eminent services to the Council.
- 1.2 Any person conferred with the title of honorary freeman may elect to use the title of honorary freewoman. All provisions relating to honorary freemen in this protocol apply equally to those choosing to be referred to as an honorary freewoman.
- 1.3 Any person conferred with the title of honorary alderman may elect to use the title of honorary alderwoman. All provisions relating to honorary aldermen in this protocol apply equally to those choosing to be referred to as an honorary alderwoman.
- 1.4 Any person nominated for appointment as honorary freeman or honorary alderman must be proposed by a serving councillor and seconded by at least one other councillor and any such nomination must be put to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services in writing.
- 1.5 The nomination shall provide evidence that the person nominated meets the eligibility requirements referred to in section 2 of this protocol.
- 1.6 The 'person' nominated in respect of an appointment as honorary freeman may be an organisation.
- 1.7 The Head of Legal & Democratic Services will receive nominations, which will be referred to Group Leaders for consideration.
- 1.8 The Head of Legal & Democratic Services will liaise with the nominating councillors to ascertain whether the nominated individuals or organisations would be minded to accept the appointment.
- 1.9 The Proper Officer will arrange an extraordinary meeting of the Council in consultation with the Mayor.
- 1.10 The formal admission of a person of distinction as an honorary freeman or conferment of the title of honorary alderman upon a past member of the

Council shall be by a resolution of the Council passed by not less than two thirds of the councillors present and voting thereon.

2. Qualifications required for appointment

Honorary Freeman

- 2.1 A person shall be deemed eligible for appointment as an honorary freeman provided that they meet all of the following requirements:
- 2.2 The person shall:
- (i) be a person of distinction
 - (ii) have given eminent service to the borough. "Eminent service" in this context includes but is not limited to any of the following:
 - a) public service (including past distinguished service as an officer of the Council)
 - b) artistic and/or cultural endeavours
 - c) business, economic growth and prosperity
 - d) charitable work
 - e) religious and spiritual life
 - f) sporting activities
 - g) improvement to the built and/ or natural environment
 - (iii) have a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to the borough of Surrey Heath, or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so have enhanced the reputation of the borough.

Honorary Alderman

- 2.3 A person shall be deemed eligible for appointment as an honorary alderman provided that they meet all of the following requirements.
- 2.4 The person shall:
- (i) not be a serving councillor
 - (ii) have served as a Surrey Heath Borough councillor for an aggregate total period of at least 8 years
 - (iii) have given eminent service to the Council during that period. "Eminent service" in this context includes but is not limited to holding during their period of service as a councillor any of the following offices:
 - a) Mayor
 - b) Leader of the Council
 - c) committee chairman

3. Rights and Privileges

Honorary Freeman

3.1 An honorary freeman shall be entitled to the following rights and privileges:

- (i) To enjoy the courtesy title of Honorary Freeman and to be so addressed.
- (ii) To have their name inscribed on the "Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough" at the Civic Offices.
- (iii) To participate in civic occasions and processions.
- (iv) To enjoy such other privileges as the Council may confer upon them from time to time.

Honorary Alderman

3.2 An honorary alderman shall be entitled to the following rights and privileges:

- (i) To enjoy the courtesy title of Honorary Alderman and to be so addressed.
- (ii) To have their name inscribed on the "Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough" at the Civic Offices.
- (iii) To have a tree planted in their honour, in a place of their choosing.
- (iv) To participate in civic occasions and processions.
- (v) To have access to parking at the rear of Surrey Heath House.
- (vi) To have access to the Members' Room at Surrey Heath House.
- (vii) To receive a copy of the agenda for each Council meeting.
- (viii) To receive travel expenses when representing the Council on official occasions, in line with the provisions in the Members' Allowances Scheme.
- (ix) To enjoy such other privileges as the Council may confer upon them from time to time.

4. Restrictions on rights and privileges

Honorary Freeman

4.1 Honorary freemen will be expected to conduct themselves in such a manner so as to not bring the office of honorary freeman or the Council into disrepute

nor to use the title or allow it to be associated with any matter of public controversy or any matter which is in any way political in nature.

Honorary Alderman

- 4.2 The role of Alderman is an honorary one and to the public is perceived to be representative of the Council. In taking up this role all Aldermen must agree and adhere to the protocol laid down by this Council.
- 4.3 In taking this role, the Alderman becomes apolitical in public, knowing that any views expressed may be interpreted as views of the Council. Aldermen are not to speak on behalf of the Council in any way whatsoever.
- 4.4 The Alderman should seek to use the honorary title for civic events, which should be attended wherever possible, and in the furtherance of community activities for the benefit of society.
- 4.5 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that whilst an honorary alderman may attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Council may from time to time decide, they shall not, as such, have the right:
- (i) to attend meetings of the Council or a committee of the Council in any capacity other than as a member of the public; or
 - (ii) to receive any allowances or other payments as are payable to councillors.
- 4.6 No honorary alderman shall, while serving as a councillor, be entitled to be addressed as honorary alderman or to attend or take part in any civic ceremonies of the council as an honorary alderman.
- 4.7 Honorary aldermen will be expected to conduct themselves in such a manner so as to not bring the office of honorary alderman or the Council into disrepute nor to use the title or allow it to be associated with any matter of public controversy or any matter which is in any way political in nature. The Council also expects honorary aldermen to refrain from making public statements which are critical of the Council.

5. Withdrawal of honorary titles

- 5.1 The offices of honorary freeman and honorary alderman are awarded for eminent service to the Borough and Council respectively, and are deemed by the Council to be non-political roles. It is therefore inconsistent for an honorary freeman or honorary alderman to be politically active. In the event of an honorary freeman or honorary alderman seeking election to the Council, or any other public office, he or she shall cease to hold the office of honorary freeman or honorary alderman (as the case may be) if he or she is still standing as a candidate immediately following the deadline for withdrawal of candidature.

- 5.2 At that time, the entitlement to the rights and privileges referred to in section 3 of this protocol shall cease automatically. The name of the person concerned will be deleted from the Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough or Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate, and that person advised accordingly.
- 5.3 The Council may withdraw the title of honorary freeman or honorary alderman on a person, together with the associated rights and privileges, for significant reasons such as bringing the Council into disrepute. The question as to whether the respective title should be withdrawn shall be put by way of formal notice of motion, which must be submitted to the Chief Executive. The motion shall contain the reasons for such withdrawal. The Chief Executive shall ensure that the motion is included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the full Council. The formal withdrawal of the title of honorary freeman or honorary alderman from a person shall be confirmed only following a resolution of the Council passed by not less than two-thirds of the councillors present and voting thereon.
- 5.4 The honorary freeman or honorary alderman who is the subject of a motion referred to in paragraph 5.3 above shall be entitled, if they wish, to make representations to the Council when the motion is considered, for which they shall have five minutes immediately following the proposer and seconder's speeches. The honorary freeman or honorary alderman shall be granted a right of reply for a further period of three minutes at the end of the debate and before a final decision or vote is taken.
- 5.5 On the passing of such resolution in accordance with paragraph 5.3 above, the name of the person concerned shall be deleted from the Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough or Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate, and that person advised accordingly.
- 5.6 Any person appointed as an honorary freeman or honorary alderman, who is subsequently re-elected as a councillor shall automatically assume the title and status of honorary freeman or honorary alderman once they cease to be a councillor.
- 5.7 Before the Council considers the formal withdrawal of an honorary title from an individual whom, it is alleged, has transgressed this protocol, the Monitoring Officer shall, subject to being satisfied that there is evidence of such transgression, contact them to remind them of the protocol and warning them that they risk censure by the Council and possible withdrawal of their title.

6. Resignation from the office of honorary freeman or honorary alderman

- 6.1 An honorary freeman or honorary alderman may, at any time, tender their resignation from the respective offices of honorary freeman or honorary alderman which shall be given in writing to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services.

- 6.2 Upon receipt by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services of the written notice of resignation referred to in a) above, the entitlement to the rights and privileges described in paragraph 3 of this protocol shall cease automatically. The name of the person concerned shall be deleted from the Roll of Honorary Freemen or the Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate.