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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>ADOPTION OF A SCHEME OF ENROLMENT FOR AN HONORARY ALDERMAN OR ALDERWOMAN</b>
<b>Meeting and Date:</b>	<b>COUNCIL – 25 JANUARY 2017</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>
<b>Decision Type:</b>	<b>COUNCIL FUNCTION</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>UNRESTRICTED</b>

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**Purpose of the report:** To consider adopting the Scheme of Enrolment for Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Dover District Council as set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

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**Recommendation:** ***Repeal of existing scheme***

- (a) That the Council repeal the 'Policy for Long Service Awards to Elected Members of Dover District Council.
- (b) That any Members who were eligible for the award at the time of its repeal and who haven't received an award be given the choice of receiving an award recognising their service.

***Adoption of new scheme***

- (c) That the Council adopt the Scheme of Enrolment, including the rights and privileges, for Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen as set out in Appendix 2.
  - (d) That on conferment of the courtesy title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman, the recipient be provided with a commemorative scroll and badge.
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## 1. **Summary**

This report sets out a process by which the Council could award the courtesy title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman in accordance with the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## 2. **Introduction and Background**

2.1 In July 2015 the Council adopted a 'Policy for Long Service Awards to Elected Members of Dover District Council' as part of regularising the position in respect of recognising long service. The Council had previously issued awards for long service to three members who had stood down at the May 2015 elections and had a combined service of eighty-nine years between them.

2.2 While the current policy recognises duration of service, the majority of eligible members have indicated that they would prefer to wait until after their time in office

before receiving such award despite it being based on a qualifying period of 20 years non-continuous service and being open to existing Members. An alternative would be to consider a more flexible policy that recognised the quality of contribution by Members regardless of length of service and was awarded at the end of a Members service on the Council either due to retirement or failure to be returned at an election.

- 2.3 The Local Government Act 1972 makes provision for a local authority to award the titles of Honorary Alderman (or Alderwoman) and/or Honorary Freeman (or Freewoman) based on contribution to the council or community respectively. This report focuses on the option of replacing the existing 'Policy for Long Service Awards to Elected Members of Dover District Council' with a policy for the conferment of Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman upon former members of the Council.

### **3. Eligibility Criteria for Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen**

- 3.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a local authority to confer the title of Honorary Alderman (or Alderwoman) upon 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". It is for the Council to determine who in its judgement has rendered 'eminent services' and the legislation does not define the term further.
- 3.2 It is worth noting that the legislation makes provision that any former Member who is conferred the status of Honorary Alderman (or Alderwoman) and who is subsequently re-elected to the Council shall have their status as Alderman (or Alderwoman) placed in abeyance for the time that they hold office and may not be referred to as Alderman (or Alderwoman) or exercise any of the associated privileges.

### **4. Rights and Privileges of an Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman**

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

"An honorary alderman [or honorary alderwoman] 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 (including a joint committee upon which they are represented); or
- (b) to receive any such allowances or other payments as are payable under sections 173 to 176 [of the Local Government Act 1972]."

- 4.2 Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen would of course still be able to attend those meetings of the Council that were open to the public in the capacity of a member of the public.

- 4.3 While the courtesy title of 'Honorary Alderman' or 'Honorary Alderwoman' is the only privilege that aldermanic status confers under the legislation, the majority of authorities that confer aldermanic status tend to confer additional rights and privileges such as:

- (a) The right to wear the badge of office of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman on civic occasions (where such badge is awarded);

- (b) Invitations to civic events organised by the Council;
  - (c) Representing the Council at civic/ceremonial events where the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are absent; and/or
  - (d) Having the Council's Civic Flag (not the Union Flag) flown at half-mast upon their death
- 4.4 The attached document at Appendix 2 sets out the proposed rights and privileges for Dover District Council Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman.

#### **Scroll for Honorary Aldermen or Alderwomen**

- 4.5 Many authorities award a scroll in a presentation case and/or badge for Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen. The cost of purchasing a scroll can range from £100 upwards depending on whether it is hand illuminated (the most expensive option) or computer produced (the cheaper option). However, as an alternative the Council's in-house design studio and print room could also be used to produce a scroll at a more nominal cost. The scrolls can be framed, presented tied with a ribbon or presented in a scroll case.
- 4.6 An Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman's badge would need to be a custom design and the cost would vary depending on how elaborate a badge was required.
- 4.7 A Roll of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen would be established for those conferred the title and a list of such members with a brief biography of their service on the Council would be maintained on the council's website.

#### **5. Process for Nomination of an Honorary Alderman**

- 5.1 As the conferment of the title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman is a matter upon which Members have the final decision, it is proposed that the process of nominating former members of the council for consideration be undertaken by Members rather than officers. To ensure that there is support for the nomination it is proposed that the nomination should be made in writing using the agreed form and each nomination should be proposed and seconded by serving Members of the Council.
- 5.2 Nominations would be submitted to the Director of Governance who would screen the nominations for eligibility (as per the scheme) and submit a report with all qualifying nominations to the appropriate council body for consideration.
- 5.3 The candidates for nomination would then be considered by a committee and that Committee would in turn make recommendations for Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen to the full Council, where the final decision would be made. This could be a committee of the Council specifically created for such a purpose or an existing non-executive committee such as the General Purposes Committee (the preferred option).
- 5.4 The title of Honorary Alderman (or Alderwoman) can only be conferred by a "resolution of not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specifically convened for the purpose".
- 5.5 It is proposed that the ceremony at which the title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman is conferred should be held on the date of the first Council meeting after the successful conferment vote.

## **6. Revocation of the Title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman**

- 6.1 The legislation does not make provision for the withdrawal of the title of Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman once it is conferred.
- 6.2 Some authorities have a clause in their scheme of enrolment which purports to allow the Council to withdraw recognition of the conferment Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman in exceptional circumstances. The Solicitor to the Council doubts that such a provision is lawful and therefore the proposed scheme of enrolment does not contain such a provision. Section 298(4) of the Local Government Act provides that the right to take part in civic ceremonies is a right to take part in those which the council “may from time to time decide”. Therefore it is proposed that should circumstances arise which would call into question the suitability of an Alderman or Alderwoman to continue in that role, that rights or privileges could be withdrawn although not the honorary title itself.

## **7. Identification of Options**

- 7.1 While a scheme of enrolment is not required for a Council to confer aldermanic status upon a former member, the adoption of a scheme would provide transparency to both elected members and members of the public. A suggested policy is attached at Appendix 2.
- 7.2 There are 3 options identified for this matter – (i) to proceed with the scheme as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, (ii) to amend the proposed scheme or (iii) not to proceed further and keep the existing long service award.
- 7.3 If option (i) or (ii) is adopted then it would be intended to award a scroll and a badge to the Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman unless the Council specifies otherwise. The preferred approach would be for the scroll to be designed and produced in-house to minimise costs. The badge would have to be produced externally.
- 7.4 It is proposed that rather than create a new committee for the purpose, if Option 8.1 or 8.2 is adopted then the General Purposes Committee should be designated to receive the nominations report of the Director of Governance and be charged with making recommendations to the full Council as to whether in its view the nomination should be accepted.

## **8. Evaluation of Options**

- 8.1 To adopt the Scheme of Enrolment for Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Dover District Council as set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

This is the preferred option and there are minimal resource implications when compared to the previous scheme and it offers a process by which notable service by former councillors can be recognised.

- 8.2 To amend the Scheme of Enrolment for Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Dover District Council proposed at Appendix 2 of this report.

This is not the recommended option as the proposed Scheme as drafted is consistent with legislation and best practice. In addition, depending on the nature of the amendments a further report may be required setting out any resource implications.

- 8.3 To not adopt a Scheme of Enrolment for Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Dover District Council and 'Policy for Long Service Awards to Elected Members of Dover District Council'.

This is not the preferred option.

9. **Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Section 249(4A) of the Local Government Act 1972 permits a principal council, in this case Dover District Council, to 'spend such reasonable sum as they think fit for the purpose of presenting an address, or a casket containing an address, to a person on whom they have conferred the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman'.

- 9.2 As it is for Members to determine who in their opinion is suitable to be have the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman it is difficult to quantify the number of awards to be given in any given year. However, reviews of other authorities who have adopted a policy indicate that the level of conferment beyond the first year when a number of historical contributions might be recognised is likely to be a small number and predominantly in the period following the period immediately after the ordinary elections of the Council every four years (i.e. May 2019, May 2023, etc.).

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972

Appendix 2 – Scheme of Enrolment for Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen of Dover District Council

Appendix 3 - Nomination Form

11. **Background Papers**

None

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