

# **Protocol on the appointment, role, status, rights and obligations of Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen as approved by Council on 10 April 2014**

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. Procedure for nomination and appointment**

- a) 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 Democratic Services Manager in writing.
- b) The nomination referred to in a) above shall provide evidence that the person nominated:
  - (i) meets the eligibility requirements referred to in paragraph 2 of this protocol, and
  - (ii) will accept the appointment

(The 'person' nominated in respect of an appointment as honorary freeman may be an organisation.)
- c) Upon receipt of a nomination, the Democratic Services Manager shall prepare a report for the next appropriate ordinary Council meeting which shall set out details of the nomination and invite the Council:
  - (i) to give formal consideration to the nomination and
  - (ii) if so minded, to agree to arrange a meeting of the Council specially convened for the purpose of either admitting the nominee as an honorary freeman of the borough or conferring upon the nominee the title of honorary alderman, as appropriate.
- d) 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

A person shall be deemed eligible for appointment as an honorary freeman provided that they meet all of the following requirements:

The person shall:

- be a person of distinction
- have given eminent service to the borough during that period. "Eminent service" in this context includes but is not limited to any of the following:

- public service (including past distinguished service as a councillor or officer of the Council)
  - artistic and/or cultural endeavours
  - business, economic growth and prosperity
  - charitable work
  - improvement to the built and natural environment
  - political activities
  - religious and spiritual life
  - sporting activities
- have a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to the borough of Guildford, or have made a major contribution to national life and in doing so have enhanced the reputation of the borough

### Honorary Alderman

A person shall be deemed eligible for appointment as an honorary alderman provided that they meet all of the following requirements:

The person shall:

- not be a serving councillor
- have served as a Guildford Borough councillor for an aggregate total period of at least 12 years
- 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:
  - Mayor
  - Leader of the Council
  - Executive member/Lead Councillor
  - committee chairman

### **3. Rights and Privileges**

#### Honorary Freeman

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

- To enjoy the courtesy title of Honorary Freeman and to be so addressed.
- To have their name inscribed on the "Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough" kept at the Guildhall.
- To wear the robes of an honorary freeman at meetings of the Council held at the Guildhall and on other appropriate civic occasions and processions.
- To receive a copy of the agenda for each Council meeting and a copy of the Council Yearbook and Diary.
- To enjoy such other privileges as the Council may confer upon them from time to time.

### Honorary Alderman

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

- To enjoy the courtesy title of Honorary Alderman and to be so addressed.
- To have their name inscribed on the "Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough" kept at the Guildhall.
- To wear the robes of an honorary alderman at meetings of the Council held at the Guildhall and on other appropriate civic occasions and processions.
- To receive a copy of the agenda for each Council meeting and a copy of the Council Yearbook and Diary.
- To enjoy such other privileges as the Council may confer upon them from time to time.

#### **4. Restrictions on rights and privileges**

The restrictions set out in this part of this protocol apply only when the person concerned acts in their capacity as an honorary freeman or honorary alderman, as appropriate.

### Honorary Freeman

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. The Council also expects honorary freemen to refrain from making public statements which are critical of the Council.

### Honorary Alderman

The role of Alderman is an honorary one, but to the public is perceived to be representative of the Council. Part of this perception is historic and part because in the City of London the role of an Alderman is very active.

In taking up this role all Aldermen must agree and adhere to the protocol laid down by this Council. There are three key points:

- (1) That the person becoming an Alderman does so in the full knowledge that they are perceived to be representative of the civic element of the Council and must act to the highest standards.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Alderman is to 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.

The role is an honour bestowed by Full Council and the recipient is aware that this honour can also be removed, either through transgression of this protocol or because the individual wishes to re-engage in an active political agenda (see section 5 below).

Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that:

- (i) 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
  - to attend meetings of the Council or a committee of the Council in any capacity other than as a member of the public; or
  - to receive any allowances or other payments as are payable to councillors.
- (ii) 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.

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**

- a) 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. As such, the Council considers that it is 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 to any other local authority, or to Parliament or the European Parliament, 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. At that time, the entitlement to the rights and privileges referred to in paragraph 3 of this protocol shall cease automatically. The Democratic Services Manager shall delete the name of the person concerned from the Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough or Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate, and advise that person accordingly.
- b) Subject to paragraph f) below, the Council may withdraw the title of honorary freeman or honorary alderman on a person, together with the associated rights and privileges. 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 Monitoring Officer. The motion shall contain the reasons for such withdrawal. The Monitoring Officer 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.
- c) The honorary freeman or honorary alderman who is the subject of a motion referred to in paragraph b) 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 five minutes at the end of the debate and before a final decision or vote is taken.

- d) On the passing of such resolution in accordance with paragraph b) above, the Democratic Services Manager shall delete the name of the person concerned from the Roll of Honorary Freemen of the Borough or Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate, and advise that person accordingly.
- e) Notwithstanding paragraph a) above, a person appointed as an honorary alderman and subsequently re-elected as a councillor before the adoption of this protocol by the Council shall be entitled to be known as an honorary alderman once they cease to be a councillor. In all other cases, any person appointed as an honorary freeman or honorary alderman, who is subsequently re-elected as a councillor shall not automatically assume the title and status of honorary freeman or honorary alderman once they cease to be a councillor. The Council may, however, re-confer such title on the person concerned.
- f) 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**

- a) 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 Democratic Services Manager.
- b) Upon receipt by the Democratic Services Manager 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 Democratic Services Manager shall delete the name of the person concerned from the Roll of Honorary Freemen or the Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough, as appropriate.

A copy of this protocol shall be sent to all honorary freemen and honorary aldermen and shall be posted on the Council's website.