

CAB 1980
FOR DECISION
WARD(S): ALL

CABINET - 17 MARCH 2010

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 MARCH 2010

COUNCIL – 21 APRIL 2010

HONORARY ALDERMEN – MEMBERS REPORT BY COUNCILLOR READ

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (GOVERNANCE)

Contact Officers: Stephen Whetnall/Chris Ashcroft Tel No: 01962 848220/848284
cashcroft@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Under Standing Order 36, Councillor Read has requested that the Council consider introducing the position of Honorary Alderman. The intention would be to bestow the title on those past Members who have given excellent service to the Authority and the community.

A report from Cllr Read is attached as Appendix A. This sets out the statutory background and generally how it could be applied in Winchester. It also seeks agreement, in principle, to create the position of Honorary Alderman.

Creating Honorary Alderman would have a small financial impact. An assessment of the circumstances in which the honour could be bestowed is set out below, should Members wish to proceed with the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

To Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee

That it be recommended to Council whether, in principle, the introduction of the position of Honorary Alderman is supported, together with possible guidelines which should be adopted for the criteria for selection and nature of the role, if agreed.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The detailed background to the office of Honorary Alderman is given in the report by Councillor Read, which is attached as Appendix 1. If Members wish to pursue the suggestion, consideration would have to be given to guidelines for selection and the nature of the civic ceremonies to which Honorary Aldermen could be invited. Only Members who have ceased to be on the Council would be eligible.

2 Nature of Role

- 2.1 In a Winchester context, the following might be appropriate civic occasions to which Honorary Aldermen could be invited :-
- (a) Mayor Making
 - (b) Cathedral Services
 - (c) Remembrance Day
 - (d) Royal Visits
 - (e) Freedom Ceremonies and Parades

3 Guidelines for Selection

- 3.1 Possible guidelines could be:
- (a) a minimum number of years service (in aggregate) – to be agreed
 - (b) no more than, say, six Aldermen to be in post at any one time
- 3.2 Members would also need to determine whether any Member with service over and above the norm should be eligible, or whether the honour should be restricted to those who have held the position of Mayor, Portfolio Holder or Committee chairmanships.

- 3.3 Since the last time the Council considered and decided not to proceed with the proposal (January 2000), there has been encouragement for the role in the Government White Paper 'Communities in Control – Real People, Real Power'. There is also a view that establishing the position of Honorary Alderman not only gives an opportunity to recognise outstanding local community service, but also retains to some extent the wealth of local government experience and knowledge which such people have accumulated over the years.
- 3.4 For completeness, it should be mentioned that the Council does continue to involve Past Mayors who are no longer serving Councillors, by inviting them to attend Mayor Making and other appropriate functions.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN
(RELEVANCE TO):

No direct relevance.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

It would be usual to present a framed scroll to record the honour – at about £500 or so per recipient. The costs of the Special Council Meeting to award the honour would be minimal as it would be held immediately before a normal meeting.

RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Councillor Read's Report

Report from Councillor Read**Appendix A****Honorary Alderman**

The Local Government Act of 1972 introduced the Post of Honorary Aldermen. The position of Alderman ceased to exist as a consequence of the local government reorganisation of 1974. Along with other positions that were abolished at the time, including for example that of Recorder, the law made provision for councils to bestow an honorary position if it is so wished. In 2003 the position of Recorder for the Council was restored when His Honour Judge Michael Brodrick was installed as Recorder for Winchester (now HH Judge Keith Cutler).

Statutory Powers: Honorary Aldermen**Extract from Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972**

"**249 - (1)** 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 aldermen 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 councillors of the council.

(2) No honorary alderman shall, while serving as a councillor of the council, be entitled to be addressed as alderman or to attend or take part in any civic ceremonies of the council as an alderman.

(3) Services rendered to the council of an existing county, county borough, borough or urban or rural district the area of which becomes wholly or partly included in a new county or district shall be treated for the purposes of subsection (1) above as services rendered to the council of the new county or district, as the case may be.

(4) 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 (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 above".

(5) The council of a London borough or a district having the status of a city, borough or royal borough 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, admit to be honorary freemen of the city, borough or royal borough persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the city, borough or royal borough, but the admission of a person to be an honorary freeman shall not confer on him any such rights as are referred to in section 248(4) above.

(6) The council of a London borough or a district which has the status of a city, borough or royal borough may spend such reasonable sum as they think fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person upon whom they have conferred the title of honorary alderman or admitted to be an honorary freeman of the city, borough or royal borough.”

Winchester is the senior Mayoralty in England, second only to the City of London and last considered whether or not to bestow the honour of Honorary Alderman in January 2000, when it was decided not to proceed. Many of the local councils in Hampshire have bestowed the honour on former members of the council. In Portsmouth an honorary alderman is invited to events such as Mayor Making, civic services and Remembrance Day.

The number of Alderman varies from council to council. Some councils in Hampshire have a fixed number and consider a new appointment when an honorary alderman dies or wishes to relinquish the honour, other councils have a fixed term of 10 years.

Who should be nominated as Honorary Alderman?

In councils where the honour is used it is offered to former members of the council who have given excellent service to the authority.

- a* the length of service to the council of 12 yrs and,
- b* will have served in the office of Mayor or serve as a portfolio member for three years.

WHY WINCHESTER SHOULD BESTOW THE HONOUR OF ALDERMAN

1 The honour of Freedom of the City is rarely given to former members of the Council. The last case was Mrs Barbara Carpenter Turner who was twice Mayor of Winchester and a local historian of some renown (although last month the Council informally agreed to award this honour to Professor Martin Biddle). The position of Honorary Alderman could be a way of honouring former members of the Council who have not reached the very high standard to be considered as a Freeman of the City.

2 There are several former members and current members of the Council who have served the qualifying period as suggested above who may deserve the recognition. In other Hampshire authorities where the honour is bestowed it is greatly appreciated by members of all groups.

3 The honour would be in keeping with Winchester's position as the Senior Mayoralty in England.

4 The honour would maintain formal links with distinguished former members of the Council.

I would therefore like to request that the Council agree to the principle of activating the position of Honorary Alderman.