

Constitution – Part 5 – Codes and Protocols – Protocol for Conferring the Title of Honorary Alderman

Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives principal councils the power to confer the title of '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 no longer Members of the Council.

Nomination

The appointment of Honorary Alderman is to confer recognition on Members who have rendered eminent services to the Council.

'Eminent' has a dictionary meaning which includes 'highly regarded' and 'distinguished'. 'Eminent services' connotes making a positive difference or impact over and above carrying out normal Council duties to a basic or acceptable standard i.e. being 'distinguished' for proper reasons and in the service of the Council.

Nominations for the appointment of an ex-Member to become an Honorary Alderman must be made in writing to the Chief Executive who will consult with the Monitoring Officer, Leader of the Council and leaders of each political group. They will make the decision as to whether the nomination will be put before the General Purposes Committee. The nomination must be made by five current serving Members. The nomination must set out the reasons why it is considered that the nominee has rendered eminent services to the Council.

The questions to be answered are:

(i) What services did the person provide as a Councillor to the Council, during whatever time they served?

(ii) Were those services, in the opinion of the Council, 'eminent services'?

(iii) Has the former Councillor completed 15 years' service on Harrogate Borough Council or any of its predecessor authorities? The predecessor authorities are:

- Harrogate Borough Council
- Knaresborough Urban District Council
- Ripon City Council
- Nidderdale Rural District Council
- Masham Rural District Council
- Ripon and Pateley Bridge Rural District Council
- Thirsk Rural District Council
- Wetherby Rural District Council
- Wharfedale Rural District Council

- Wath Rural District Council

It is made clear under this protocol examples of what are not criteria such as:-

(i) Length of service alone – Whilst a number of councils do in fact use ‘length of service’ (such as, for example, 12 years or 15 years) by itself as a good enough measure of the ‘eminent service. However, this is not the criterion stated in the Act.

(ii) Service to a political party or group – the criterion is not support for a particular political party or group. It is ‘eminent service to the Council’ which means that any past political differences should be ignored in making an assessment of a past or present Councillor’s service contribution to the Council.

(iii) Senior positions – the mere fact that a Councillor held or holds a senior position or positions is not evidence of the provision of eminent services to the Council. This would be to confuse ‘appointment’ to a position with ‘outcome’. It is not a senior appointment reward.

Appointment of Honorary Aldermen

It will be the responsibility of a Councillor to fill in a nomination form for the appointment of an Honorary Alderman and gain the support of four other Councillors for the nomination. The nomination form must then be submitted to the Chief Executive for consultation. If, in the opinion of the Chief Executive (after consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Leader of the Council and other political group leaders), there is a sufficient degree of support as to the conferment of the title, then the Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer will present a report to the General Purposes Committee. If the Committee are in agreement that the Criteria has been met, they will propose the requisition of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to consider conferment of the legal title.

The former Member will be invited to the Extraordinary Council meeting where Council will be called upon to make a decision based upon the recommendation from the General Purposes Committee which will be presented to Council in the Minutes from the meeting. On a vote being taken on whether to confer the title of Honorary Alderman there must be a majority of not less than two-thirds of the Councillors voting. If Council take the decision to confer the title, the former Member will be invited to sign the Roll of Honorary Aldermen and will be presented with a badge by the Mayor. The new Honorary Alderman can then address the Council for five minutes. A reception for the Honorary Alderman and their guests will be arranged by the Mayor’s Secretary for a future date.

Rights of Honorary Aldermen

- To enjoy the courtesy title of Honorary Alderman and to be so addressed.
- To be listed on the Roll of Honorary Alderman and receive a badge of office.

- To receive a copy of the Council agenda (either by email or by post) and to attend the meetings of the Council (without power to speak or vote)
- To receive invitations to civic occasions to which Members of the Council are invited.
- To walk in civic processions immediately behind Members of the Council.
- To enjoy other privileges as the Council might from time to time determine.

Removal of Title of Honorary Alderman

If an Honorary Alderman is re-elected to the Council, they will forfeit the title of Honorary Alderman until a time when they are no longer on the Council. The title will be automatically re-conferred and the Honorary Alderman will not need to sign the roll again.

There may be occasions where, due to the past or future behaviour of individuals who have been appointed as Honorary Aldermen, the Council may wish to remove the title of Honorary Alderman from an individual. This decision will be taken by full Council following a report from the Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer to the General Purposes Committee. Two-thirds of those present at Council must vote to pass the resolution.

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