1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To present the draft Honorary Aldermen protocol, complete with new criteria for the nomination process, for endorsement by the General Purposes Committee following a recommendation from the Committee that the Head of Legal and Governance draft a protocol setting out the arrangements for conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on a former Councillor.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That General Purposes Committee endorse the draft Honorary Aldermen Protocol;

2.2 That the General Purposes Committee propose a qualifying period after which a former Member can be considered for the position of Honorary Alderman; and

2.3 That the Honorary Aldermen Protocol be included as an additional section in the Constitution.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASONS FOR DECISIONS

3.1 The Honorary Aldermen Protocol will clearly set out the process for nominating new Honorary Aldermen; the appointment of Honorary Aldermen and the rights of Honorary Aldermen. The protocol also details the circumstances and process for the removal of the title of Honorary Alderman. This will make the process more open and transparent.
3.2 The criteria for conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on a former Councillor will require evidence that the former Councillor has rendered eminent services to the Council as well as serving on the Council for the agreed qualifying period. The objective of requesting such evidence is to confirm that the position is prestigious, and is not simply an award for long service.

3.3 The qualifying period for the enrolment of Honorary Aldermen was reduced from 20 years to 15 years in 1995. The General Purposes Committee are requested to consider whether the 15 year period is still appropriate and whether it should be changed.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

4.1 Not to produce a protocol – this has been rejected as it would go against the recommendation from the General Purposes Committee.

4.2 Not to include new Criteria – this has been rejected as the production of the protocol is an opportune time to review the practices in relation to Honorary Aldermen.

4.3 Not to review the qualifying period – this has been rejected as the last review was in 1995 and the production of the new protocol is an opportune time for a further review.

5.0 THE REPORT

Background

5.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that a principal Council may confer the title of Honorary Alderman on a person who has, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as a past member. The resolution must be passed by no less than two-thirds of the members voting at the meeting of Council specially convened for this purpose.

5.2 The Act does not specify how eminent service is defined and, as such, this had been left as a matter for local interpretation.

Harrogate Borough Council’s Current Process

5.3 The current process for conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on a former Councillor at HBC is set out in Minute 48/95 of the Policy and Resources Committee 26 September 1995. It was subsequently approved by Council in October 1995 and states the following:

- The title of Honorary Alderman can only be conferred on a former member of the authority.

- Honorary Aldermen must have served at least 15 years in total on the Council. This service need not be continuous and can include service on any of the following constituent authorities that made up the
Harrogate Borough prior to reorganisation in 1974:

- 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

5.4 The process for appointing an Honorary Aldermen is currently as follows. Following the retirement of a Member who has served at least 15 years on the Council the former Member will be approached to advise of their eligibility for the position of Honorary Alderman and requesting the former Member to confirm whether or not they wish to be considered for the position. A report would then be presented to the General Purposes Committee requesting it to consider conferring the title of Honorary Alderman upon the former Member at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council.

The former Member will be invited to the Extraordinary Council meeting where Council will be called upon to endorse the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee. 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.

5.5 At the time of writing the report Harrogate Borough Council has 27 Honorary Aldermen. By the time of the 2022 District Elections a further 12 Councillors will be eligible for the position.

Comparison with other Councils

5.6 In order to review the Honorary Alderman process research has been undertaken to ascertain how other Council’s operate. Below is information from other North Yorkshire Councils as well as other Councils in England that operate differently to HBC:

**North Yorkshire County Council** – 20 years’ service + eminent service. North Yorkshire currently has 12 (tbc) Honorary Aldermen.

**Selby District Council** – 20 years’ service + eminent service. Selby currently has 9 Honorary Aldermen.

**Craven District Council** – 15 years’ service + eminent service. Craven currently has 2 Honorary Aldermen.
Ryedale District Council – 15 years’ service + eminent service. Ryedale currently has 7 Honorary Aldermen with a further 3 to be added in October.

Richmondshire District Council – 20 years’ service + ‘a significant contribution to the Council and the people it represents.’ Richmondshire currently has 6 Honorary Aldermen.

Scarborough Borough Council – 16 years’ service. Scarborough currently has 14 Honorary Aldermen.

Guildford Borough Council – 12 years’ service + eminent service which includes but is not limited to a Councillor holding the office of Mayor/Leader/Executive Member or Committee Chairman.

Dover Borough Council – 20 years’ service + eminent service which includes but is not limited to a Councillor holding the office of Chairman, Leader, Leader of a Political Group, Chairman of a major Committee or by holding one or more senior positions on the Council. Applications for nomination as an Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman shall be made by 2 serving Members of the Council.

East Hertfordshire District Council – 5 full terms in office. The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Council, be authorised to determine whether a person under consideration for this award has rendered eminent services to the Council when they were a Member.

Southampton City Council – 8 years’ service and: have

- Been a chairman for at least two years of a principal member-level body, that being of the Cabinet, the Overview & Scrutiny Board, the regulatory committees and other such committees established from time to time;
- Been a member of the Cabinet for at least three years
- Been Mayor of the City; and/or
- Given other outstanding service to the City.

Bristol City Council – 10 years’ service and have held a significant position of public responsibility as either:

- Lord Mayor;
- Elected Mayor;
- Deputy or Assistant Mayor;
- Leader of the Council;
- Executive Member;
- Any other position attracting the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance under the Council’s approved members allowance scheme (excluding attendance at the Appeals Committee).

Proposed Honorary Alderman Protocol

5.7 The proposed Honorary Alderman Protocol is attached to the report at Appendix 1.
There are several proposed changes to the Honorary Alderman process, including:

- The introduction of a nomination form that must be completed by a serving Councillor and must be supported by four other serving Councillors. This nomination form should be submitted to the Chief Executive for initial consideration.

- The introduction of selection criteria based on eminent service, not length of service.

- The introduction of the consultation group made up of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Leader of the Council and leaders of other political groups.

- The ability of full Council to remove the title of Honorary Alderman from an individual in relation to behaviour that brings the Council into disrepute or in the case of the Honorary Alderman’s re-election to the Council.

The Qualifying Period

5.8 The General Purposes Committee are also asked to decide how long the qualifying period should be. Former Councillors are currently considered for the position of Honorary Aldermen after 15 years’ service on the Council. As stated above, this does not have to be continuous. The Committee can decide to keep it at 15 years or they can decide to change it. A possible change could be to set the qualifying period to tie in with terms of election, i.e. setting the qualifying period to 16 years (4 terms of office) or 20 years (5 terms of office.)

6.0 REQUIRED ASSESSMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The following were considered: Financial Implications; Human Resources Implications; Legal Implications; ICT Implications; Strategic Property/Asset Management Considerations; Risk Assessment; Equality and Diversity (the Public Sector Equality Duty and impact upon people with protected characteristics).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Following a resolution from the General Purposes Committee a new Honorary Alderman Protocol has been drafted. It is for the Committee to decide whether they wish to adopt the new policy or keep the current policy.

Background Papers –

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