

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

**Ordinary Council**

**Honorary Titles – Honorary Aldermen**

**Report of:** *Claire Mayhew – Corporate and Democratic Services Manager*

**Wards Affected:** *All*

**This report is:** *Public*

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 To confer honorary titles under section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That, in pursuance of section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of the Council being of the opinion that eminent services have been rendered to the Council by former Councillors Richard Alan Michael Davies and David Wesley Tee the Council confers on each of them the title of Honorary Alderman.**

**3. Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 The title of ‘Honorary Aldermen’ are as the name suggest honorary and are conferred in recognition of eminent past services to the Council.
- 3.2 The role attracts no remuneration and involves no entitlement to take part in decision-making. The last vestige of the time when “aldermen” did have a decision-making role was swept away by the Local Government Act 1972.
- 3.3 Holders of such a title 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 to attend meetings of the Council or their Committees or to receive any allowances or other payments.

#### **4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 4.1 To be eligible for the honorary title of Honorary Alderman, the person nominated must be a former councillor of this Council and not be currently a member of the Council. In addition, the person nominated must in the opinion of the Council have rendered 'eminent services to the council'.
- 4.2 There is no minimum number and there is no maximum of Alderwomen or Aldermen which is or which can be laid down.
- 4.3 The sole legal criterion for a past member is of having rendered 'eminent services to the council'. As the term is not defined in the Act and there is no statutory guidance or assistance to Councils at a national level in determining what it might mean, it is for the Council to decide locally what constitutes 'eminent services to the Council'.
- 4.4 'Eminent' has a dictionary meaning which includes 'highly regarded' and 'distinguished'.
- 4.5 'Eminent services' connotes making a positive difference or impact over and above the carrying out of mere normal council duties to a basic or acceptable standard i.e. being 'distinguished' for proper reasons and in the service to the Council.
- 4.6 The legislation therefore deliberately fails to give a national definition beyond the words 'eminent services' and leaves it for a local decision by Councillors and to be an exercise of discretion at the time a decision is called for, based 'on the opinion of the Council' with such power being properly exercised. It is thus determined by 'quality', not necessarily 'quantity'. Innovation and excellence, for example, can be recognised.
- 4.7 In reality the bestowal of the legal title of 'Honorary Alderman' is by way of a distinguished service award.
- 4.8 It is not a long-service award. Whilst it has been known for a number of Councils to use 'length of service' (such as, for example, 12 years or 15 years) as a good enough measure of the 'eminent services', this is patently wrong. It is self-evidently the case that there will be members who serve out their time in public service in a perfectly satisfactory manner without being 'eminent'.

A 'length of service' criterion of itself is unlawful as it fetters the Council's discretion when determining 'eminent services to the Council'. Not only is 'length of service' not the criterion in the Act but it also does nothing to enhance public confidence in local government and democracy to use such a measure as time served.

4.9 It is not a party political honour. The criterion is not support for a particular political party or group. It is 'eminent services to the Council' which means that any past political differences should be ignored in making an assessment of a past Councillor's service contribution to the Council.

4.10 It is not an award for having *simply* held a senior Council position when a Councillor. The mere fact that a councillor held 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 therefore not a senior appointment reward. Senior responsibility allowances in the Members' Allowance Scheme are designed to support those in senior positions. The honorary title is not part of the package.

4.11 The questions to be answered are:

(1) What services did the person provide as a councillor to the Council during whatever time they served?

(2) Where those services, in the opinion of the Council, 'eminent services to the Council'?

4.12 Each nomination will therefore be determined on its merits, purely assessed against the sole criterion of having rendered 'eminent services to the council.'

## **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

5.1 The Council wishes to recognise those who merit the highest awards that the Council can bestow on a person or organisation.

## **6. Consultation**

6.1 Members were asked to put forward suitable nominations.

## **7. References to Corporate Plan**

7.1 None

## **8. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

**Name & Title:** Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Interim Chief Finance Officer  
(Section 151 Officer)

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- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

**Name & Title:** Daniel Toohey, Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal  
Services

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- 8.2 Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council by resolution to confer the title of Honorary Alderman at a meeting of the Council specially convened with notice of the object but such a resolution must be passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting at that meeting if the resolution is to be effective.

- 8.3 The relevant criteria are set out in the body of the report.

**Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

None.

- 9. Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

- 9.1 Nomination forms submitted

## **10. Appendices to this report**

- 10.1 None.

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