

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	22 June, 2017
Title of report:	Awarding honorary titles - policy statement
Report by:	Democratic Services Manager

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve the policy statements relating to the criteria upon which the council would seek to award Honorary Freeman/Freewomen titles.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) The policy statement and procedure at appendices 1 for nominating honorary freemen/women is agreed and adopted;**
- (b) Awards of honorary titles are limited to a maximum of 4 titles held within the county at any one time; and**
- (c) The democratic services manager be delegated responsibility to oversee and administer the process of nominations.**

Alternative options

- 1 **Do nothing.** This is not recommended. Having transparent agreed criteria mitigates the risk that the award of such titles is viewed as a 'closed shop'.
- 2 **Agree different criteria:** It is open to cabinet to adopt other criteria. However regard should be had to the legislative basis behind the award of honorary titles and the integrity of the process for considering such awards. The draft criteria proposed are in line with those adopted by other councils.

Reasons for recommendations

- 3 These recommendations are made in light of recent informal requests for consideration of nominees for an honorary title.

Key considerations

- 4 Following the successful instalment of Sacha Kindred, CBE as an honorary freeman of the county of Herefordshire, a number of other possible nominees for similar awards have been discussed informally. While no new nominations have yet materialised, interest in honorary freemen/women awards has been heightened.
- 5 This needs to be balanced with the views expressed by some members that awarding honorary titles should remain rare and infrequent, to underpin the importance and significance of such awards. To this end, cabinet is asked to limit the frequency of making such an award to a maximum of four titles held within the county at any one time.
- 6 A policy statement has been proposed and is attached at appendices 1. This is designed to assist full Council in selecting nominees for honorary freemen/women.

Community impact

- 7 The principal community impact relates to being a more open and transparent in local decision making and being more accountable to the electorate. These policy statements provide a clear framework for all members, regardless of political background or position, to put forward suggestions for honouring past councillors and local citizens who have provided eminent service.

Equality duty

- 8 The Equality Duty 2010 has 3 aims (general duty)
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that who do not.
- 9 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and

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demonstrate that we are paying “due regard” in our decision making in the design of polices and in the delivery of services.

- 10 As this is a decision in regards to awarding honorary titles we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Financial implications

- 11 There are no direct financial implications to the council if these statements are adopted. However, there are costs incurred in making honorary awards. It is traditional, for example, to award honorary freemen/women with a scroll to recognise the recipient’s achievements. Cabinet members should consider benchmark costs in the region of £500 to £1000 for such ceremonial regalia (*limited to a one off cost per successful nomination*).

Legal implications

- 12 The ability to confer honorary titles is provided under section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. This is a discretionary power exercised by full council. The policy statement is however a cabinet function.

Risk management

- 13 The risks in any eventuality around the cabinet’s decision is minimal. Herefordshire Council has not had policies of this nature since it became a unitary authority in 1998. However, as noted above, and following the successful honorary freeman award to Sascha Kindred, CBE we might expect more nominations to come forward than has been the case to date. Managing this risk is best served by placing a clear limit on the number of honorary titles that can be held at any one time in the county.

Consultees

- 14 These new proposals have not been shared with political group leaders. The policy statement has been requested for consideration by cabinet by the chairman, chief executive and the leader of the council. The report author has reviewed a range of other local authority policy statements addressing the procedures for honorary titles. The policy statement largely conforms to approaches other local authorities adopt, while introducing Herefordshire council specific time and frequency limits on the making of such awards.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Honorary Freeman/Women – Policy Statement

Background papers

- None identified.