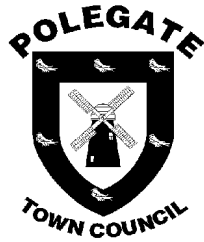


Polegate Town Council



‘HONORARY FREEMAN OF THE TOWN’ POLICY

Policy Number 30		
Issue No.	Date completed	Details of amendments
1	03/02/2016	First draft
2	29/02/2016	Minor emendations made by Town Clerk
3	11/03/2016	Approved by Finance & Policy Committee
4	23.05.16	For adoption at Annual Stat Meeting
5	22.05.17	Adopted at Annual Stat Meeting
6	21.5.18	Adopted at Annual Stat Meeting
7	20.5.19	For review and adoption at annual stat meeting
8	05.05.21	Adopted at Annual Stat Meeting
9	22.05.22	Adopted at Annual Stat Meeting
10	May 2023	Adopted at the Annual Stat Meeting

By virtue of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 Part XIX and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Council can award a 'Title of Dignity' to a person in recognition of significant contributions being made to the local community. Polegate Town Council may award an 'Honorary Freeman of the Town' or 'Honorary Freewoman of the Town'.

Nominations, by motion, must be made by a serving Town Councillor but the honour is **open to anyone who has served the Town as a current Councillor** and who meets the following nomination criteria:

- (i) The nominee is a Town Councillor or Officer.
- (ii) The nominee has made an outstanding contribution to, or rendered eminent service to, the Council during their term of office.
- (iii) The nominee has made an exceptional and outstanding contribution to the local community in many ways over a period of 20 years or more.
- (iv) If a serving Councillor is to be honoured, the end of the current serving term may be used in calculating the 20 years of service.

There is no limit to the number of nominations or holders of the title, but the nature of the nomination criteria means it is unlikely that the honour will be frequently awarded and will therefore remain distinctive.

Once a nomination has been received it will be considered by a Special Meeting of the Full Council. Members may conduct enquiries to verify the merits of a nomination. The motion must be approved by no less than two-thirds of members of the Council present and voting.

Following a resolution by Full Council that an award is justified, the title of 'Honorary Freeman of the Town' will be granted by the Town Mayor and the title holder presented with a certificate citing the grounds for the award. The presentation will be made by the Town Mayor at an appropriate event. The event may be held immediately after the conclusion of the Special Full Council meeting, or on another suitable date determined by the Council.

Estimated costs for honorary freeman

Honours board	80
Jewel/Badge	250
Hire of hall	150
Catering £15 per head max 40 people	600
Scroll/certificate	80
Adding to honours book	20
Invites etc	100
Publicity	0
	1280

In the United Kingdom, an Honorary Freeman is a special and prestigious title bestowed upon individuals who have made outstanding contributions and shown exceptional dedication to a particular city or town. It is a way for communities to recognize and honour those who have made a significant impact on their locality, even if they are not originally from there.

Being named an Honorary Freeman is a high honour and typically involves a formal ceremony where the recipient is granted certain privileges and recognition within the community. However, it's important to note that this title is purely symbolic and does not come with any legal or official responsibilities.

The concept of Honorary Freeman dates back to medieval times when freemen were granted certain rights and privileges within a city. Today, it serves as a way for communities to express gratitude to individuals who have gone above and beyond in their service or achievements, contributing to the betterment of the place and its people.

Overall, becoming an Honorary Freeman is a testament to the individual's exceptional efforts and their significant impact on the community's well-being and development.

Polegate Town Council has a policy which sets out the criteria for the honour.

CLlr Malcolm Cunningham will have served for more than 20 non consecutive years in his role as Town Councillor and has been nominated to receive this award by the Mayor. As with the previous recipient it is intended to have a formal (small) event¹ where the award is presented, an honorary freeman Jewel (badge) with councillors and civic dignitaries attending and a small catered event. All costs to come from general reserves. The jewel, hire of the hall catering, scroll and signing of the book, gold leafing of the honours board etc is expected to come to less than £2000. (similar to previous awards). If resolved it is expected that due to the lead in time of the jewel and organisation time, this would take place around March 2024.

As per the special full council meeting, a special meeting has to be called for the resolution of this honour and voting with 2/3rds of the council present. (please see agenda wording). A copy of the council's policy is also attached for reference.

To delegate the arrangements to the town clerk (in liaison with the Mayor and the recipient).

¹ Maximum of 70 persons. St Georges Hall, Polegate.

March 2013

HONORARY TITLES AND OFFICERS OF DIGNITY

Background

1. Individuals may enjoy special status in their local area in a variety of different ways. Such status can be by appointment, by conferment or by admission. This Legal Topic Note concentrates on the titles of freemen, officers of dignity and honorary freemen and freewomen. It will first consider the current situation in respect of the ancient titles of freemen and officers of dignity. Then it will outline the position in relation to the power to appoint honorary freemen and freewomen.

Freemen

2. Before the municipal reforms of 1835 there was a class of persons known as “freemen” in old corporate boroughs, enjoying special rights in the corporate property. The right to be admitted a freeman rested upon the custom of the borough, varied by the terms of its charter and, in certain cases, by local statutory provision. Generally the admission of a freeman, as distinct from the conferment of the honour of an honorary freedom, might be acquired by marriage, birth or employment to an existing freeman. The effect of successive reforms of local government law has been to continue the custom of maintaining a roll of freemen and regulating admission to it. Now the admission of freemen (as opposed to honorary freemen and honorary freewomen) of a pre-1974 municipal borough is to be approved by the chairman of the district council of the district in which the former borough lies (section 248 of the Local Government Act 1972 Act (the 1972 Act) as amended by section 27 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act)).

Officers of dignity

3. Prior to local government reorganisation in 1974 a number of cities and boroughs exercised by charter, custom or statute powers to appoint local officers of dignity. Among these honorary appointments were sheriffs, high stewards, honorary recorders, honorary freemen and honorary aldermen. Where, as a result of local

government reorganisation, the area of an existing city or borough became a parish in England or a community in Wales having a separate council, any powers to appoint local officers of dignity became exercisable by the parish or community council (Section 246(3) of the Local Government Act 1972).

Honorary titles (honorary freemen and freewomen)

4. After local government reorganisation in 1974 a number of local authorities were given the power to admit honorary aldermen and freemen (section 249 of the 1972 Act). However, that power was not extended to parish councils in England or community councils in Wales. From 13 November 1980 any parish or community having by grant under the royal prerogative the status of city and any parish or community entitled by such grant to be called and styled a royal town to admit honorary freemen (section 180 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980). Only 10 local councils had the standing to confer the title of honorary freeman; seven in England (the councils of the cities of Chichester, Ely, Hereford, Lichfield, Ripon, Truro and Wells) and three in Wales (the councils of the Cities of Bangor and St Davids and the Royal Town of Caernarfon).
5. From 12 January 2010, all local councils may exercise powers to confer the title of “honorary freeman” or “honorary freewoman” to persons of distinction and those who, in the council’s opinion, have rendered eminent services to the council’s area (section 249(5) and (6) of the 1972 Act). The admission of an honorary freeman or honorary freewoman must be by resolution made at a meeting of the full council specially convened for such purpose and passed by no than less than two-thirds of the members of the council (Section 249(8) of the 1972 Act). That section also requires “notice of the object of the meeting” to be given. This confirms the need for the agenda with the public notice and summons to members in respect of the council meeting to itemise a motion to confer the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman. A local council may spend a reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom it has conferred the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman (Section 249(9) of the 1972 Act).
6. Prior to the changes in the law set out above, some local councils, who wanted to honour local residents who rendered notable service to their town or community or who achieved national fame, conferred the titles “honorary citizen” or “honorary townsman” or “honorary burgess.” Given the current express powers to admit

“honorary freemen” and “honorary freewomen” it is no longer necessary (or possible) for local councils to confer other titles.

Other Legal Topic Notes (LTNs) relevant to this subject:

LTN	Title	Relevance
10	Royal Visits	Sets out information in respect of royal protocol and forms of address.

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