

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Constitution Committee

Date of Meeting: 18th November 2010
Report of: Democratic Services Manager
Subject/Title: Honorary Aldermen and Freeman

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report invites the Constitution Committee to consider further the rights and privileges to be extended to Honorary Aldermen and Freeman of the Borough.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the information set out in the report and make recommendations to Council.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable the proposals to be adopted and implemented.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 N/A

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 N/A

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 The report deals with the adoption of policies in relation to Honorary Aldermen and Freeman appointed by Cheshire East Council.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend 'such reasonable sum as they think fit' on presenting an address or casket containing the address to the Honorary Alderman or Freeman. Council can also provide benefits, rights and privileges to which Honorary Aldermen and Freeman.
- 7.2 A budget realignment exercise is being undertaken through an analysis of civic spend since vesting day. As part of the Business Planning Process efficiency targets of £49K have been set for the Civic Budget.

- 7.3 The cost of providing tickets to Councillors for general admission to the Cheshire County Show is provided for in the Civic Budget. This can be extended to provide tickets to Aldermen and Freemen.
- 7.4 There is no provision in the Civic budget for providing tickets to Councillors, Aldermen and Freemen to the RHS Flower show which are currently provided free of charge.
- 7.5 There is no provision in the Civic Budget to meet any fees for providing Life Passes to Tatton Park for Aldermen and Freemen.
- 7.6 There is no provision in the Civic Budget to provide hospitality to Councillors, Honorary Aldermen and Freemen in relation to the County Show and the RHS Show. A typical civic event including room hire and free hospitality costs £5000.
- 7.6 The cost of inviting Aldermen and Freemen to other civic events will be provided for within the Civic Budget.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 Section 248 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits the council of a relevant authority, by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, to admit to be Honorary Freemen of the Borough persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the Borough.
- 8.2 With regard to Honorary Aldermen, under the provisions of Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, "a principal council may, by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, confer the title of honorary aldermen 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 not then members of that council".

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 None identified.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 The Civic Sub-Committee at its meeting on 3rd August 2010 considered a number of matters on which it made recommendations to this Committee and Council.
- 10.2 At the meeting of Council held on 14th October the majority of recommendations were accepted.

- 10.3 Council agreed that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Constitution Committee, dealing with the rights and privileges of Honorary Aldermen/Freemen and serving Councillors in relation to attendance at civic functions, including the County Show and RHS Show, and access to Tatton Park, the report to include any resource implications and the rationale for any charges involved. Further investigations have been carried out to establish the historical position in relation to the County Show and RHS Show and how this has changed since vesting day.

RHS Flower Show

- 10.4 Members of the County Council had tickets for the RHS Flower Show under the County Council arrangements (by arrangement with RHS but not contractual). In addition, the RHS President and County Council Chairman used to have a joint VIP lunch event in the Tenants Hall that included access to the show for those attending. The invitation list was drawn up and managed by the County's Chief Executive and the Chairman's Office and included Honorary Aldermen.
- 10.5 Since vesting day, only Members receive RHS tickets. They have not been offered to Aldermen. The joint VIP lunch event in the Tenants Hall no longer takes place. The tickets for Cheshire East members are by arrangement and the good will of the RHS rather than being an obligation or contractual arrangement and remain at no cost to the Council.

Cheshire County Show

- 10.6 Members of the County Council had tickets for the County Show under the County Council arrangements. These were paid for by the County Council. In addition, the President and Vice-President of the Show used to have a VIP lunch events to which the Chairman of the County Council was invited. The County Council sub-let a Marquee to provide a lunch and again an invitation list was drawn up and managed by the County's Chief Executive and the Chairman's Office and included Honorary Aldermen.
- 10.7 Since vesting day all Members are offered show tickets as before, paid for by Cheshire East Council. They have not been offered to Aldermen. The Chairman and President of the County Show continue to hold lunches but these are by invitation only from the event organisers. For 2010 the Leader of the Council and the Mayor were invited for lunch. Neither Cheshire East nor Cheshire West provided any hospitality last year.

Passes for Tatton

- 10.8 The Policy of the County Council was that passes for Tatton were issued to Aldermen upon the advice of the Chief Executive and the Chairman's office. It was the policy of the County Council to do this 'gratis'. There has been no statement of policy since vesting day. The Committee may wish therefore to recommend to Council a policy for adoption by Cheshire East.

- 10.10 Tatton passes were, and still are, issued on request for retiring employees on a payment of between £150 and £200, dependent on number of years' service. The fee is in lieu of estimated lost income to Tatton and to cover administration costs. Sometimes this is paid for by the individuals themselves or more usually as part of a leaving present or by the department or school. They are issued with a 5 year period that is renewable until the demise of the individual.

Civic Events

- 10.11 Honorary Aldermen and Freemen are included on the Civic Invitation list which ensures they are invited to events including Annual Council, The Mayors Charity Ball and Homecoming Parades etc. Any costs associated with these events are met from the Civic Budget.

Issues to consider

- the rights and privileges of Honorary Aldermen and Freemen in relation to attendance at civic functions, including the County Show and RHS Show, and access to Tatton Park,
- the rights and privileges of serving Councillors in relation to attendance at the County Show and RHS Show, and access to Tatton Park
- the level of hospitality, if any, to be extended to Councillors, Honorary Aldermen and Freemen in relation to the County Show and the RHS Show.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Paul Jones

Designation: Democratic Services Team Manager

Tel No: 01270 686458

Email: paul.jones@cheshireeast.gov.uk