

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Civic Sub-Committee

Date of Meeting: 8th September 2015
Report of: Head of Governance and Democratic Services
Subject/Title: Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Freemen

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines options open to the Council in relation to the convening of a Special meeting to appoint Honorary Aldermen and Freemen. It also summaries who can be appointed to these positions and the rights and privileges that they enjoy.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That a report be taken to the Constitution Committee recommending that a Special Meeting of Council be convened in the autumn/winter to appoint Honorary Aldermen and Freemen.

3.0 Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 To enable the Council to appoint new Honorary Aldermen and Freemen in accordance with Council policy and the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 There are no policy implications.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There would be a modest cost associated with convening a Special Meeting of Council and hosting a Civic Reception. These costs would be met from existing budgets.

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications.

9.0 Risk Management

9.1 There are no risk management implications

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows Local Authorities such as Cheshire East Council to appoint both Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen. The criterion for appointment as Freemen is that an individual should be a “person of distinction” and have “rendered eminent service to the place or area”. The criterion for appointment as an Alderman is that an individual “should have rendered eminent service to the Council as [a] past Member of that Council”. There is no bar on an individual being both an Honorary Freeman and an Honorary Alderman.
- 10.2 Those individuals or organisations who were Freemen of any of the three demised Boroughs automatically became Freemen of Cheshire East on 1 April 2009. Since its creation in 2009, Cheshire East Council has appointed seven individuals as Freemen (all 2012 Olympic or Paralympic medallists) together with the Mercian Regiment. The former County Council could not appoint Freemen. Seven former Members of Cheshire East were appointed as Honorary Aldermen following the 2011 elections.
- 10.3 Cheshire East policy in relation to the appointment of Honorary Aldermen is that a former Member should have served for a minimum of ten years (including service on one of the four demised authorities) and / or have served as Leader or Mayor of Cheshire East.
- 10.4 The Local Government Act specifies that both Honorary Freemen and Honorary Aldermen must be appointed at a Special Meeting of Council, with the appointment being endorsed by a two thirds majority of those Members in attendance at the meeting.
- 10.5 A number of Members who either stood down in May, or who were unsuccessful in seeking re-election, had been appointed by one of the four demised authorities as an Honorary Alderman before the creation of Cheshire East. These individuals automatically became Honorary Aldermen of Cheshire East on 11 May when their term as an elected Councillor ended.

The former Members were:

- Carolyn Andrew
- Roland Domleo
- Paul Edwards
- Brian Silvester

- Chris Thorley
- Paul Whiteley
- Steve Wilkinson

10.6 No formal action needs to be taken to recognise the position of these seven former Members.

10.7 There are a number of other former Members whose service on Cheshire East and/or one of the demised authorities would qualify them for appointment as an Honorary Alderman; these individuals are:

- David Brickhill
- Roy Cartlidge
- Ken Edwards
- Wesley Fitzgerald
- Shirley Jones
- Frank Keegan
- Peggy Martin
- Brendan Murphy
- David Neilson
- Andrew Thwaite
- David Topping
- Roger West

10.8 The Leader indicated at a meeting of Council earlier in the year that he wished to see a number of Members who were standing down from the Council, appointed as Freeman of the Borough. Those Members named by the Leader all satisfy the test of having rendered eminent service to Cheshire East. The now former Members are:

- Carolyn Andrew
- David Brickhill
- Roland Domleo
- Shirley Jones
- Chris Thorley
- David Topping
- Steve Wilkinson

10.9 It will be noted that former Councillors Brickhill, Jones and Topping could be appointed to the position of Honorary Alderman and Honorary Freeman. The views of the Sub-Committee are sought on this. It should also be noted that former Councillors Andrew, Domleo, Thorley and Wilkinson will, if appointed as Freeman, hold both positions.

10.10 Cheshire East policy, endorsed by Council in 2010, is that Honorary Freemen and Aldermen enjoy a limited range of privileges; these are:

- The right to attend meetings of Council;
- The right to be kept updated about the work of the Borough;
- The right to be invited to civic events (an example would be the Mayor's Civic Service); and
- Two free tickets for the RHS and Cheshire Shows each year.

10.11 Honorary Freemen and Aldermen are not eligible to claim any expenses.

10.12 There are two options in relation to the timing of a Special meeting of Council. The first option would be to convene a standalone meeting; the second would be to hold such a meeting either immediately before or after a regular meeting. Council policy is that a civic reception for newly-appointed Freemen and Aldermen is held following the Special Meeting of Council. A possible way forward would be to hold the Special meeting of Council on the same day as the December 17 Council meeting. The views of the Sub-Committee are sought on this issue.

11.0 Access to Information

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

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