

WIDDINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

GRANTING HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE PARISH POLICY

Adopted 07/11/2024

Next Review Date: November 2027

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Adopted	07/11/2024	11.24.17

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the criteria, procedure and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for the Granting of Freedom of the Parish of Widdington to individuals.

2. Granting the Freedom of the Parish

2.1 Granting the Freedom of the Parish is the highest honour that the Parish Council can bestow. Although it carries no powers, rights or privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman or Freewomen.

2.2 As this is the highest honour that the Parish Council can grant, it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value.

2.3 The award of the Freedom of the Parish is separate to the Parish Council's Annual Community Award.

3. Criteria

3.1 There is no statutory guidance that sets out any criteria for the appointment of Freemen and Freewomen.

3.2 As the Freedom of the Parish is awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the Parish, it would be inappropriate to set out strict judging criteria. However, when considering a person, or persons, for Freedom of the Parish of Widdington the following should be considered:

- There must be, or have been, a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to the Parish, or
- The person or persons will be making, or have made, a major contribution to Parish life and in doing so have enhanced the reputation of the parish.

3.3 The commitment, or contribution, to the community will be expected to have been: • delivered in a way that has brought distinction to Parish life and enhanced the Parish's reputation in the area or activity concerned,

- contributed in a way to improve the lives of those less able to help themselves, in particular the young, the elderly and vulnerable persons living within the Parish; or
- demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in the Parish.

3.4 The title will not be conferred, or considered, for a member, contractor, or employee of the council whilst still acting as a councillor, contractor or employee.

4. Cost

4.1 Section 249 (9) of Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend "such reasonable sum as it thinks fit" on presenting a casket or address to a Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman.

4.2 The Parish Council has determined that in order to mark the award of Freedom of the Parish, a framed commemorative 'scroll' or certificate will be provided to the recipient.

5. Procedure for Granting of Freedom of Widdington *Nomination*

5.1 Any Parish Councillor may nominate to the Council individuals, who in their opinion, have rendered eminent services to the Parish and who should be considered to be granted the Freedom of the Parish.

5.2 A member of the public may petition any Parish Councillor to nominate an individual to the Council individuals for consideration.

5.3 Individuals who have profited from their service would not normally be eligible, however this is subject to the discretion of the Council.

Initial consideration of a nomination for the grant of the Freedom of Widdington

5.4 Nominations for the Honorary title will be considered at an Ordinary Meeting of the Council, noting that the decision as to whether to award the Freedom of Widdington will be made at the April Ordinary Meeting of the Council with a view to awards being made at the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

5.5 The agenda item will be discussed in private, and the public and press will be excluded. The name(s) of the individual(s) must not appear in the agenda or minutes of the meeting. The following procedure shall be adopted:

- The Chair shall open the agenda item and remind the Members of this Policy Document giving guidance on those criteria for suitable nominations. • The Chair shall invite the Member(s) ('the sponsor) to present the application for nomination. The Member(s) of the Council making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in section 3 above have been met.
- The Chair shall invite all Members to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
- The Chair shall then invite the Council to pass a resolution in support of convening a meeting especially for the purpose of passing a motion relating to the granting of the award.

5.6 Immediately following the meeting, the Chair (or another nominated Councillor) must informally enquire with the proposed individual as to:

- whether or not they are prepared to accept such an award; and
- whether they are aware of any reason that their acceptance of the award may, or could be considered by a reasonable third-party, to bring the parish or the Parish Council into disrepute.

Decision as to whether to award the Freedom of Widdington

5.7 Following the discussion with the proposed recipient, the Chair will ensure that at the April Ordinary Meeting of the Council a motion to award Freedom of the Parish to a specific individual(s) is considered. The following procedure shall be adopted:

- The Chair shall open the meeting and remind the Members of this Policy Document which gives guidance on the criteria for suitable nominations.
- The Chair shall invite the Member ('the sponsor) to present the application for nomination. The Member(s) of the Council making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in section 3 above have been met.
- The Chair shall invite any members of the public who wish to speak in relation to the nomination to speak, subject to the following criteria:
 - (a) Council Standing Orders shall be followed;
 - (b) No more than two members of the public may speak in relation to each nomination, for no more than 3 minutes each, and only once during the meeting; and
 - (c) members of Council may ask questions (with the agreement of the Chair), to the member of the public who is speaking, however, questions to the member of the public who is speaking, from other members of the public are not permitted.
- The public and any press shall then be excluded from the meeting.

- The Chair shall invite all Councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
- The public and any press shall then be invited to return for the remainder of the meeting.
- The Chair shall then invite the Council to pass a resolution granting the award, which should recite the particular grounds and details of the public services rendered by the potential recipient.
- If the Council passes the resolution by no less than a 2/3rds majority then the resolution shall be recorded in the Council Minutes in the usual way.

5.8 If the motion is passed, the Chair in consultation with the Parish Clerk shall then make arrangements for the formal presentation of the 'Freedom' which will be marked by the giving of a framed certificate in a public and dignified way at the annual parish council meeting. Photographs may be taken to record the event, assuming the recipient is happy for this to happen, and placed on the Council's website.

5.9 The roll of Honorary Freemen / Freewomen shall be maintained by the Parish Clerk.

6. Legislation

6.1 Section 249 (5) of Local Government Act 1972, as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, allows the Council of a relevant authority (including a Parish Council) to admit to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of the place or area for which it is the authority:

- Persons of distinction, and
- Persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent service to that place or area.

6.2 A resolution must be passed:

- At a meeting of the Parish Council that has been convened especially for the purpose and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of the award has been given; and
- By not less than two-thirds of the members of the Council who vote on it.