

# **Beverley Town Council**

## **Honorary Freeman and Freewoman Bestowment Policy**

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## **Honorary Freeman and Freewoman Bestowment Policy**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

- (a)** 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, *inter alia*, by marriage, birth or employment to an existing Freeman.
- (b)** 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. Pursuant to 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), the admission of freemen (as opposed to admitting Honorary Freemen and Honorary Freewomen) of a pre-1974 municipal borough is approved by the chairman of the district council of the district in which the former borough lies.
- (c)** After local government reorganisation in 1974 a number of local authorities were given the power to admit Honorary Aldermen and Freemen pursuant to section 249 of the 1972 Act. However, that power was not extended to parish councils in England or community councils in Wales.

### **2. CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- (a)** On the 12th January 2010 the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 amended the provisions of the 1972 Act to enable all local councils to confer Honorary titles. By virtue of section 249(5) and (6) of the 1972 Act as amended, 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 service to the council’s area.
- (b)** Section 249(9) of the 1972 Act as amended provides that 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.

### **3. CRITERIA / ELIGIBILITY**

- (a)** Individuals from all walks of life and all sections of the community who have made a difference to Beverley are eligible to be nominated as Honorary Freemen or Freewoman.
- (b)** In keeping with the special nature of the award it shall be strictly limited to those who have made a very significant contribution to the community of Beverley and who have demonstrated "service above self".
- (c)** The award recognises extraordinary people in the community.
- (d)** The honour is awarded for the individual's lifetime and is not hereditary.
- (e)** The honour is to recognised the services of an individual.
- (f)** If the circumstance arises that a Councillors wish to nominate a couple, each should be worthy of the award in their own right.
- (g)** There is no maximum total of Honorary Freemen or Freewomen at any one time.
- (h)** There can be two new Honorary Freemen or Freewomen bestowments each Municipal Year, but in exceptional circumstances the Town Council may decide to appoint an additional number.
- (i)** However, the Town Council is not obliged to created Honorary Freemen or Freewomen every Municipal Year – this honour should be bestowed to nominees who genuinely befit the criteria to retain the special significance of such an honour, rather than a compulsory annual obligation.
- (j)** It is expected that the nominee will have given extensive and distinguished service to the community that goes beyond local government i.e. service to other organisations, voluntary, community and business groups, in a largely voluntary capacity.
- (k)** The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution to the town such as the nominee's contribution can be seen to stand above the contributions made by most other people.
- (l)** A single action, however outstanding, would normally merit a Town Council Good Neighbour Award rather than the bestowment of an Honorary Freemanship or Freewomanship.

#### **4. NOMINATION CRITERIA**

- (a)** The following should be taken into account when consideration is given to granting the honour of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of Beverley:
  - (i)** Preference should be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to a person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected from their occupation.
  - (ii)** The contribution to the welfare of the community by individuals from all walks of life, who have made a significant contribution in serving members of the community for the improvement of their welfare or the promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services.
  - (iii)** Individuals who take a real personal role and make a contribution for a significant and/or prolonged amount of their own lifetime, so as to be so outstanding in that it can be seen to stand above the contributions of most other persons.

#### **5. NOMINATION PROCEDURES**

- (a)** Nominations can be made by any Beverley Town Councillor.
- (b)** Nominations should be made in writing and delivered to the Town Clerk by the Monday before which the meeting to consider bestowments is scheduled to take place.
- (c)** the Monday before the meeting at which nominations will be considered.
- (d)** Each nomination **MUST** include a citation of no more than 250 words to evidence the service(s) carried out by the individual making them suitable for consideration of a bestowment – this must be circulated to all Councillors at the meeting in which nominations are being considered.
- (e)** Submissions delivered to the Town Clerk must outline the voluntary service provided by the individual to the community and any other examples of community spirit to justify the honour.
- (f)** Nominations, if any, will then be considered at an Extra-ordinary Meeting in September each year, at which the submissions will be presented.  
*(See Appendix: NALC Legal Topic - Honorary Titles and Officers of Dignity) – see point 5)*
- (g)** If elected members are in agreement that the nominee should be made an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the town - no less than two-thirds of the members of the council must agree the nomination. *(See Appendix: NALC Legal Topic - Honorary Titles and Officers of Dignity) – see point 5)*

- (h) All nominations of Honorary Freeman are treated in the strictest of confidence. The nominee should not be informed that they have been nominated until it has been finally approved, as it is not fair to raise expectations in case they are not met. It is imperative that submissions are not discussed with any other persons. Any disclosure could make the application invalid.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

- (a) An acknowledgement will be sent to the proposer upon receipt of the nomination form.
- (b) Correspondence will not be entered into on the merits of a particular nomination whilst it is under consideration.
- (c) All Councillors will be invited to discuss nominations received for the Honorary Freeman/Freewoman at the aforementioned Extra-ordinary Full Council meeting held each September.
- (d) Successful nominees will be informed of their Honorary Freemanship or Freewomanship no more than four weeks before the ceremonial bestowment.
- (e) The awards for each year will be presented at a specific ceremony and this will normally be the Mayor Making Ceremony held each May, but may be at another town council civic occasions, such as Civic Dinner, Civic Service or other events.

## **7. ENTITLEMENTS**

- (a) Any person declared an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the town may designate him/herself "Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the town of Beverley".
- (b) The recipient will be awarded:
- (i) a civic token in the form of a medallion.
  - (ii) a certificate to commemorate receiving the award.
  - (iii) a shield bearing the Town Crest.
- (c) Any Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the town shall:
- (i) Be invited to all subsequent civic events and functions where appropriate.
  - (ii) Be invited to be present at the Annual Mayor Making Ceremony, Civic Dinner and Civic Service.
  - (iii) Upon their death be granted a civic presence at the funeral, but only with the consent of their family (details of which can be found in the Town Council's Civic Policy and Protocol).

Approved and Adopted by Full Council on 20th February 2023

Signed



Councillor Linda Johnson  
Mayor of Beverley



Matthew Snowden  
Acting Town Clerk