

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Freemen/Women to the City of Brighton &amp; Hove</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>24 October 2013</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Oliver Dixon</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 01273 291512
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 Under current arrangements, proposals to admit a person as Honorary Freeman or Woman of the City of Brighton & Hove are considered by the council's Leaders Group before being submitted to Council for decision.
- 1.2 This report proposes a revised approach that would –
- (a) enable a wider body of persons across the city to be involved in nominations for this honour;
  - (b) set criteria that would open the award to less famous persons who have provided exceptional service to the city; and
  - (c) open the selection process by including non-councillors in the evaluation of nominations before they are recommended to Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Council approves the draft protocol set out in paragraph 6 of the report for the appointment of Honorary Freemen and Freewomen of the City of Brighton & Hove.

**3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 permits the council to admit –
- (i) persons of distinction, and
  - (ii) persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the city

to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of Brighton & Hove.

- 3.2 If the council wishes to exercise this power, the only legal requirement is that a resolution be passed to that effect at a meeting of full Council specially convened for the purpose; and that at least two-thirds of those voting are in favour.
- 3.3 The process for nominating persons to receive the honour is not governed by legislation, statutory guidance or by reference to any other formal authority. Custom and practice at Brighton & Hove has been for Leaders Group to consider a nomination and, if supported, refer it to Council for approval.
- 3.4 There is no minimum or maximum number of persons who may be admitted as Honorary Freeman / Women. Six admissions have been made since the creation of the unitary authority in 1997. Of these, five have occurred in the past four years. The persons so far admitted as Honorary Freeman/women of the city are:

**Adam Trimingham – 30 Sept 2004**

"That the honour and title of Honorary Freeman of the City of Brighton and Hove be bestowed on Mr. Adam Trimingham in grateful recognition of his eminent and distinguished service and dedication to professional journalism rendered to the City of Brighton and Hove during his illustrious and distinguished career."

**Henry Allingham – 30 April 2009**

"In grateful recognition of his exceptional services to his country during both World Wars and his work to ensure future generations would not forget the debt owed to all those who gave their lives to ensure freedom for all."

**Aung San Suu Kyi – 19 May 2011**

"In recognition of her continued efforts to support the people of Burma and the many people throughout the world striving to attain democracy, human rights, and ethnic conciliation by peaceful means."

**Flight Lieutenant Marc Heal – 19 May 2011**

"In recognition of his outstanding gallantry as the Captain of the Chinook helicopter Immediate Response Team in Afghanistan, for which the Queen awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The inspirational command of his crew and superior flying skills led to the successful extraction of 29 casualties and the saving of lives."

**Steve Overt – 24 July 2012**

"In recognition of his outstanding achievements as an athlete from the City competing at National, International and Olympic level."

**Roger French – 9 May 2013**

"In recognition of his long and distinguished career of nearly 30 years at the wheel of Brighton and Hove Buses, for his tireless work in promoting the spirit of partnership in the city and his selfless work for charities, notably as chair for nine years of the trustees of the Martlets Hospice."

**4. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 4.1 At present the Council has no agreed criteria or process for conferring the title of Honorary Freeman/woman of the City. In practice, suggestions come from

Members and they are considered by the Leaders Group. If agreed, they get referred to full Council to be agreed at a special meeting as required by law.

4.2 There are some aspects of the existing custom and practice that could benefit from a review, in particular:

- (i) the frequency with which people have been admitted to be Freeman/women of the City in the last couple of years (roughly once every year) risks diluting the special nature of the award if continued at the same rate. Other local authorities seem to confer the honour at less frequent intervals. For example, in the last five years, Southampton City Council admitted one person, Bradford Metropolitan District Council one, and Oxford City Council none. Most of the others we contacted have not conferred the title in the last 5 years.
- (ii) the mechanism for initiating nominations is random and depends on whether any Leading Member happens to think a particular person should be awarded the honour.
- (iii) although the award is made by the Council, it is done on behalf of the whole city. The person awarded the honour does not become a freeman or woman of *the Council*. They become a freeman of *the whole city* represented by the geographical boundaries of the City Council. There is therefore a question mark as to whether this should be left entirely to a few Councillors or involve an appropriate input from persons or organisations representing the public, business and voluntary sector in the city.
- (iv) the current system is, in the eyes of some, open to criticism that it does not always give sufficient focus or weight to what an individual has done for the City of Brighton & Hove, as opposed to being successful or famous with some connection with Brighton & Hove. Unlike the national honours system, our system, as currently operated, is unlikely to lead to less famous or less high profile persons, who have done something exceptional for the City or for the community, to be recognised.

## 5. PROPOSED PROTOCOL

5.1 To address the matters raised in paragraph 4.2 above, it is proposed that the Council adopts the following protocol:

- (a) The opportunity to nominate someone to be admitted as Honorary Freeman/Woman should include local organisations, businesses and residents of the city.
- (b) Publicity should be given to the nominations process at the relevant time to ensure greater openness and transparency.
- (c) Nominations should be considered by a panel consisting of the Group Leaders, the City Management Board and a representative of the community and voluntary sector. This will, to some extent, mirror the national honours

system under which the majority of members comprising an honours committee are independent of government. It is recommended that the Chair of the Panel be an independent person.

- (d) If there are, in the opinion of the Chair of the Panel and the Chief Executive, too many nominations, a shortlist of 5 nominees shall be selected by a panel consisting of the Chair, the Chief Executive and one representative of the City Management Board.
- (e) The honour should be conferred sparingly. To preserve the uniqueness and special quality of the award, nominations would normally be sought only once every four years. This should be timed, where possible, to avoid the municipal year in which a local election takes place. Accordingly, the first of these four-year nomination cycles should commence in 2016.
- (f) Candidates should be evaluated against the statutory criteria (i.e. persons of distinction, and persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the city) but with more emphasis on the person's particular contribution to the City or Brighton & Hove and less emphasis on being a person of distinction.
- (g) The successful candidate will be recommended for admission as a Freeman/woman of the city at a special meeting of the Council, in accordance with section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- (h) The Chief Executive is authorised to take all steps necessary for, or incidental to, supporting this protocol, including the appointment of the Chair of the Panel for shortlisting purposes if not already appointed by the Panel.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Leaders Group have considered and agree in principle the protocol set out in paragraph 5.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The costs associated with implementing and managing the protocol specified in paragraph 6 are not expected to be significant, and would only be incurred once every four years. These costs will be met within existing revenue budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis*

*Date: 10/10/13*

### Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Legal implications are set out in paragraphs 3.1- 3.3 of the report.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Oliver Dixon*

*Date: 10/10/13*

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The recommended protocol supports diversity in terms of (i) soliciting nominations from a wider body of people across the city; and (ii) involving a broader range of panellists to evaluate nominations.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.4 None.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices**

None

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

**Background Documents**

None

