

**BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR  
OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

**POLICY FOR THE ADMISSION OF PEOPLE TO BE HONORARY  
FREEMEN/FREEWOMEN OF THE BOROUGH**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval to the Policy and process for the admission of people to be honorary Freemen/Freewomen of the Borough.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Policy and procedure for the admission of people to be honorary Freemen/Freewomen of the Borough, set out in the Appendix to this report, be approved; and
- 2.2 That Standing Order 18 (Voting) be amended by the addition of the following paragraph:-
- (d) Voting on any question to admit a new Freeman/Freewoman of the Borough, or rescind any honour previously conferred, must be supported unanimously by those Members present at a Full Council meeting specially convened for that purpose.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, provides that "a relevant Authority may admit to be honorary Freemen or honorary Freewomen of the place or area for which it is the Authority (a) persons of distinction, and (b) persons who have, in the opinion of the Authority, rendered evident services to that place or area".
- 3.2 The power reflects the impact of the local authority changes that took place in 1974, both ensuring that people admitted as Freemen/Freewomen prior to that date retained that status in the new authorities and providing the new authorities with a power to admit new Freemen/Freewomen.
- 3.3 Since 1974, the Council has used this power on three occasions: in June 2000 to admit Rita Britton and Harold Dickie Bird, MBE and again in November 2007 to admit the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mason of Barnsley. All three people were admitted on the basis of citations, which identified the contributions that they had made:-
- (i) Rita Britton ... in recognition of her eminent contributions to the image, well being and development of the Borough, both as a recognised leader within the national and international fashion industry and as a successful local business woman who has conspicuously used and shared this success to the benefit of the community including the development of the Barnsley Design Centre to encourage young designers to keep their skills within the Region.

- (ii) Harold "Dickie" Bird, M.B.E. ... in recognition of the success he has achieved locally, nationally and internationally in his chosen and lifelong commitment to cricket and the pleasure and honour this has given to the community and in particular for his consistent endeavours in promoting the image of and acting as a world-wide ambassador for the Borough.
- (iii) The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mason of Barnsley ... in recognition of over fifty years of eminent service to the Borough of Barnsley as a trade unionist, parliamentarian, and Minister of the Crown under two prime ministers, holding high office of state; most notably for Defence and Northern Ireland, privy councillor and Peer of the Realm.

3.4 Whilst the contributions that all three have made are clear, the Council has no policy that it would use in considering the admission of future Freemen or Freewomen. In addition, the process for considering new Freemen or Freewomen has been somewhat ad hoc, and without any formal arrangements.

#### **4. PROPOSAL**

4.1 It is proposed that the Council adopt the Policy for admission of people to be honorary Freemen and Freewomen of the Borough as set out in the Appendix to this report. The Policy includes criteria that will be used in considering such people, taking account of their prominence in the local community, the benefit to the local area arising from the services they have rendered to the Borough and the period over which they have done this. The Policy also sets out the process to be used for admitting new Freemen and Freewomen, by way of a panel of members and, where appropriate, community representatives, to be done every 5 years starting in November 2015. It also provides for the Freedom to be rescinded if this is warranted.

4.2 The Policy proposes that at least 10 members of the Council would need to nominate a person to be a Freeman or Freewoman for consideration by the panel. Appointments will be made at a Full Council meeting specially convened for that purpose, and be supported unanimously at that meeting. To give this effect, it is proposed to amend Standing Order 18 (Voting) accordingly.

#### **5. LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Policy for the Admission of People to be Honorary Freemen/  
Freewomen of the Borough.

#### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 File held in the Legal and Governance Directorate, Town Hall, Barnsley.  
Telephone (01226) 773421 for further information.

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## BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **POLICY FOR THE ADMISSION OF PEOPLE TO BE HONORARY FREEMEN/FREEWOMEN OF THE BOROUGH**

#### **1 Purpose**

To establish a Policy for the admission of people to be honorary Freemen or Freewomen of the Borough, setting out criteria to be considered for this and procedural aspects.

#### **2 Legal Background**

The power to admit people to be honorary Freemen or Freewomen of the Borough is provided in Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. This states that "a relevant authority may admit to be honorary Freemen or honorary Freewomen of the place or area for which it is the authority (a) persons of distinction, and (b) persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area."

#### **3 Criteria for considering a Person to be an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Borough**

- a) A person of distinction - to fulfil this criterion, the person in question should have some prominence in the local community in their line of work. The person in question is likely to already have some prominence or wider recognition and should have been active and prominent in their field of activity over a sustained period of at least 10 years.
- b) Rendered eminent services - in having that prominence, it is expected that this will have resulted in some tangible, recognised "benefit" to the local area. This could be by raising nationally the profile or reputation of the local area; or by representing the interests of the local community on the national stage; or by attracting jobs, investment or other similar benefits to the Borough; or by encouraging or supporting other local people or local activities in their field.

- c) **Timeliness** - by admitting a person as an Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman, that person becomes further able to represent the Borough. Therefore, it is important that the Honour is conferred only on those people who are still prominent in their field or, having recently retired, still have sufficient profile to raise the profile or reputation of the Borough. A person would not normally be admitted as a Freeman or Freewoman more than 10 years after they had retired from "public life".

#### **4 Process**

- a) The Council will next consider the admission of new Freeman and Freewomen in November 2015, and then every 5 years thereafter.
- b) Any nomination for a person to be admitted as an Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Borough must have the support of at least 10 members of the Council eligible to vote on such a matter. The nomination must include a citation that demonstrates how that person fulfils the criteria at Section 3.
- c) Nominations will be considered by a panel to be Chaired and convened by the Leader of the Council. The panel will be composed of Elected Members and, where appropriate, community representatives. Elected Member representation will be balanced to represent the political balance of the Council overall. The panel will be advised by the Chief Executive and Director of Legal and Governance or their nominees.
- d) The Panel will meet during the September of the year in question and make recommendations to Council on the admission of new Freeman or Freewomen. The admission of the person(s) in question must be approved at a full Council meeting specially convened for that purpose and must be supported unanimously at that meeting.

## **5 Rescission of Freedom**

The Council may, on a unanimous vote on a motion duly submitted, rescind the honour of Freeman or Freewoman if information comes to light that, in the view of the Council, would render the person concerned ineligible or otherwise unworthy of the honour, when judged against the criteria set out at Section 3 above.

Assistant Director, Governance and Member Services

16<sup>th</sup> July 2014

