Broadhempston Parish Council

POLICY FOR GRANTING THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE PARISH

Introduction
This policy sets out the criteria, procedure and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for Honorary Freemen, Honorary Freewomen, and the Granting of Freedom of the Parish to individuals.

Individuals may be made freemen of the parish in England to recognise their distinguished service or significant contribution to the local community. This honour is typically reserved for those who have shown exceptional commitment and have enhanced the reputation of the parish.

Legal framework
Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, allows the council of a relevant authority (including a parish council) to admit honorary freemen of the place or area for which it is the authority.

Granting the Freedom of the Parish is the highest honour that the parish council can bestow. Although it carried no powers, rights or privileges, those who receive the honour can use the title of Freeman.

Section 249(9) of the Local Government Act 1972 allows the council to spend 'such reasonable sum as it thinks fit' on presenting an address to an Honorary Freeman. If there is no budget provision for this, the costs can be allocated under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Criteria
The title is awarded to persons of distinction who have rendered eminent service to the parish or community. Nominees are often recognised for their outstanding contribution compared to others.

Candidates will typically have had a long-standing relationship with the parish, demonstrating commitment to its welfare. Their contribution should have enhanced the reputation and quality of life within the parish. Many recipients will have made extensive contributions in a voluntary capacity, often through community organisations or local initiatives. This title serves to honour individuals who have made a lasting impact on the community, reflecting the values and appreciation of the parish.

Individuals who have profited from their services would not normally be eligible. However, this is subject to the discretion of the council.

The title is considered the highest honour a parish can bestow and is awarded sparingly to maintain its significance.

Procedure
Any parish councillor may nominate 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. A member of the public may petition any parish councillor to nominate an individual to the

council for consideration. The decision must be made through a formal resolution at a specially convened council meeting and must receive a two-thirds majority vote.

The nomination for the honorary title will be considered 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, and the following procedures shall be adopted:

- The chair shall open the agenda item and remind members of the legislation, guidance and 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 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.

The chair, or other nominated councillor, shall, prior to the issuing the of meeting calling notice for the purpose of passing a motion relating the to the granting of the award, 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.

The parish council will convene a meeting of the council especially for the purpose, and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of the award to a specific individual(s) has been given.

At that meeting, the following procedure shall be adopted:

- The chair shall open the meeting and remind members of this policy, 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 have been met.
- The chair shall invite any members of the public who wish to speak in relation to the nomination to speak.
- With the agreement of the chair, members of the council may ask questions of 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 press shall then be excluded from the meeting.
- The chair shall invite all councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination(s).
- 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.

If the motion is passed, the chair, in consultation with the clerk, shall then make arrangements for the formal presentation of the 'Freedom' which will be marked by the giving of a framed certificate, in line with the following procedure:

- Albeit that the bestowing of the Freedom of the Parish actually occurs at the point the parish council resolved to grant the Freedom, the presentation ceremony marks the occasion in a public and dignified way.
- It is expected that the occasion for the presentation ceremony shall be sufficiently prominent and visible to members of the public, for example at the annual parish meeting, village fete, or other public event.
- The presentation would usually be made by the parish council chair with other councillors present.
- Following the presentation, an opportunity should be provided for the recipient to reply.
- After the formal proceedings come to an end, it will be usual to adjourn for a reception. This gives an opportunity for the public and invited guests to offer their congratulations to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman of the Parish.
- Photographs should be taken to record both events and placed on the parish council website.

The roll of Honorary Freemen shall be maintained by the parish clerk and shall be publicly displayed.

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