

REPORT TO: PARISH COUNCIL
DATE OF MEETING: 2 JANUARY 2019
SUBJECT: PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WORKING GROUP
HONORARY FREEMAN/HONORARY FREEWOMAN STATUS

This report comprises:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Policy Background
- 3 Suggested Criteria
- 4 Terms of Reference for the Working Group

1 INTRODUCTION

At the meeting held on 5 December 2018, the Parish Council re-appointed the Working Group which is asked to consider criteria and potential worthy recipients of the award of either Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of the parish.

Members appointed to the Working Group are:

Councillors M Andrews, S Cheshire, B Gibbs, K Gibbs and R Hancock

The Clerk was asked to draw up Terms of Reference for the Working Group. This report sets out proposed Terms of Reference, but also includes much of the content of the report which was submitted to the Parish Council on 1 November 2017. The resolution of the Council, at that meeting, was -

RESOLVED: (a) *That the Parish Council introduce an Honorary Freeman/
Honorary Freewoman award scheme with effect from 1 April 2018;*

(b) *That a Committee be established comprising Councillors S Cheshire, B Gibbs,
K Gibbs and R Hancock;*

(c) *That the Committee's main role would be to develop the scheme of awards, to
include:*

- *Drawing up guidelines to be taken into account when considering
nominations.*
- *Publicising the scheme*
- *Drawing up an application form for nominations.*

(d) *That further consideration be given to this item at the December meeting.*

2 POLICY BACKGROUND

The tradition of granting the Freedom is a way of giving public recognition to those who are held in high esteem by both the Parish Council and the residents of the area.

After Local Government re-organisation in 1974, a number of local authorities were given the power to admit honorary aldermen and freemen, pursuant to Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. That power was not extended to town and parish councils in England.

On 12 January 2010, amended provisions were made to 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' on persons of distinction and those who, in the Council's opinion have rendered eminent services to the Council's area.

Section 249(8) of the 1972 Act, as amended, provides that the admission of an honorary freeman or honorary freewoman must be by resolution made at a meeting of the full council specially convened for such purpose and passed by no less than two-thirds of the Members of the Council present and voting.

3 SUGGESTED CRITERIA

The following is a suggested policy statement and criteria which the Council is invited to adopt when considering awarding Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman status.

3.1 Policy Statement

The Parish Council wishes to recognise the efforts of members of the community or organisations which demonstrate outstanding commitment to the well-being of the parish.

The Council will do this in special circumstances which meet the criteria of this policy by awarding to an individual or organisation the title of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Shavington-cum-Gresty.

There shall be no limit on the number of awards granted in any one year, but the honour will be awarded only on exceptional occasions and each will be judged on merit.

At no time is political affiliation considered as part of the decision-making process and all nominations will be treated equally.

3.2 Nomination Criteria

The following will be taken into account when consideration is given to granting the award of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Shavington-cum-Gresty.

1. Preference will be given to a person/organisation which performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to those whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected for their occupation.
2. Nominees need not necessarily be resident within the Shavington-cum-Gresty area but the contribution being recognised must be for the benefit of the parish.
3. Any nominated parish councillor should have retired from their elected/co-opted post prior to consideration of nomination and their contribution must be over and above what is expected of a councillor in performing their statutory duties.
4. The contribution to the community of the area should comprise one or more of the following:
 - (a) A significant allocation of the person's/organisation's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their well-being;
 - (b) The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made;
 - (c) A contribution which is seen to stand above the contributions of most others.

3.4 Nomination Procedure

1. Nominations should be made in the strictest confidence without the nominee's knowledge. Any resident or elector of the Parish of Shavington-cum-Gresty may make a nomination but it must be sponsored by a parish councillor.
2. Nominations must be made in writing to the Parish Clerk and supported by evidence of the voluntary service provided by the individual/organisation to the community, and any other evidence of service which justifies the honour.

3. Received nominations will be distributed to all parish councillors, as part of the agenda process. The matter will be considered at an ordinary Parish Council meeting, with the press and public excluded. The purpose of this part of the process is to ensure that there is general support for the nomination.
4. If the Parish Council is 'minded' to approve the nomination, the nominee will be informed and invited to accept the honour. Following the nominee's informal acceptance, a meeting of the Parish Council, specially convened for the purpose, and where notice of the object of the meeting has been given, shall be arranged (in accordance with S.249 (and appropriate sub-sections) of the Local Government Act 1972).
5. In accordance with S.249 of the Local Government Act 1972, at least two-thirds of the Members present, and voting must agree the nomination.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WORKING GROUP

4.1 Name of the Group

- (i) The Working Group shall be called the 'The Honours Working Group' [to be agreed or amended by the Parish Council].
- (ii) The Group shall be a standing Working Group of the Parish Council and shall be re-appointed at Annual Council each year.

4.2 Membership of the Group

- (i) The Working Group shall comprise five parish councillors.
- (ii) There is no requirement for a Chairman, or other official positions within the Group, but the Group Members may appoint a Chairman if they wish.

4.3 Role of the Working Group

- (i) The Working Group has no delegated powers, as might be given under S.101 of the Local Government Act 1972. It shall, essentially, be a fact-finding group and its work will include consideration of the following, but not limited to:

Developing a scheme of awards to include –

- Drawing up guidelines to be taken into account when considering nominations.
 - Publicising the scheme.
 - Drawing up an application form for nominations.
 - Taking into account suggested criteria detailed in paragraph 3 above.
- (ii) The Working Group shall make recommendations to the Parish Council as and when required.
 - (iii) There shall be no formal schedule of meetings.
 - (iv) There is no requirement for minutes to be prepared, but any actions to be recommended to the Parish Council must be submitted to the Clerk in a timely manner to ensure their inclusion on the next Council agenda.

4.4 Frequency, Timing and Procedure of Meetings

- (i) The Working Group shall meet as and when required, in whatever location is agreed by the Members.
- (ii) The Parish Council's Standing Orders and Access to Information regulations shall not apply to meetings of the Group.

4.5 The Parish Council shall:

- (i) Support the Working Group in its activities and provide sufficient assistance as required, and within its overall resources.

4.6 The Working Group shall NOT:

- (i) Commit the Parish Council to any expenditure.
- (ii) Announce any information publicly, whether on the website, social media or other form of communication. (This remains a matter for the Parish Council's Communications Committee).

Carol Jones
Clerk
27 December 2018