

LONGHOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY FOR GRANTING OF THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE PARISH

1. Background

1.1 Previously there was no specific legislation or power for a Parish / Town Council to award Honorary Freedom of the Parish. Advice in regard to honouring of citizens indicated that in the absence of express statutory power, it was considered that local councils could, nevertheless, admit to be honorary citizens of their parishes and communities persons who have served the public well over the years. Any expenditure incurred in connection being funded under the LGA Section 137 power to spend.

1.2 From the 12th January 2010, the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) amended the provisions of the LGA 1972 (S.249) to enable all local councils to confer honorary titles.

1.3 By virtue of Section 249(5) and (6) of the 1972 Act as amended, all local councils may now exercise powers to confer the title "Honorary Freeman" or "Honorary Freewoman" to persons of distinction and those who, in the Council's opinion, have rendered eminent services to the council's area.

2. Legal process

2.1 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 specifically convened for such purpose and passed by no less than two-thirds of the members of the Council.

2.2 Section 249 (8) also requires "notice of the object of the meeting" to be given. This confirms the need for the agenda with the public notice and summons to members in respect of the Council meeting to itemise a motion to confer the title of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman. 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 or whom it has been conferred the honorary title.

3. Council Process

3.1 A Parish Council can award a 'Title of Dignity' to a person in recognition of significant contributions being made to the local community. Longhoughton Parish Council may award the title of 'Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Longhoughton'.

3.2 In keeping with the special nature of the award it shall be strictly limited to residents from any walk of life who have made a very significant voluntary contribution to Longhoughton Parish and who have demonstrated "service above self", or a significant national contribution relative to Longhoughton Parish. It would be expected that the nominee will have given extensive and distinguished service to the community which transcends local government i.e. service to other organisations, voluntary and community groups, in a largely voluntary capacity and not usually simply for long service on the Parish Council. The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution to the Parish so as the nominee's contribution can be demonstrably seen to stand head and shoulders above the contributions made by most other people.

3.3 The Parish Council's decision on the award of the title is final and no discussion or correspondence will be entered into on the matter.

3.4 There is no limit to the number of nominations or holders of the title, but the nature of the nomination criteria means it is unlikely that the honour will be frequently awarded and will therefore remain distinctive. The award will be conferred for the life of the title holder but is not hereditary in nature.

3.5 Nominations must be made by a serving Parish Councillor, though any local resident may approach a Councillor and recommend a nomination.

3.6 All nominations of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewomen are to be treated in the strictest of confidence.

3.7 Once a nomination has been received it will be considered by a meeting of the Full Council. This discussion will be held under 'restricted business' and will therefore exclude members of the public. The whole Council must resolve by at least a two-thirds majority that the distinction of 'Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Longhoughton' be conferred upon the nominee.

3.8 Following a recommendation by Full Council that an award is justified the title of 'Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Longhoughton' will be granted by the Chairman of the Parish Council and the title holder presented with a scroll citing the grounds for the award, or a certificate, or such other award that the Council see fit. The presentation of an award would be made by the Chairman at a suitable appropriate event. A copy of the award will be held on record by the Parish Clerk. The title holder will be able to style themselves 'Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of the Parish of Longhoughton'. The title does not convey any legal or financial privileges on the holder.

4. Detailed Procedure for Granting of Freedom of Longhoughton Parish

4.1a. Any Parish Councillor may nominate to the Council 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.

4.1b. A member of the public may petition any Parish Councillor to nominate an individual to the Council individuals for consideration.

4.2. Individuals who have profited from their service would not normally be eligible, however this is subject to the discretion of the Council.

4.3. The nomination for the Honorary title will be considered at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council. The agenda item will be discussed 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. The following procedure shall be adopted:

a) The Chair shall open the agenda item and remind the Members of this Policy Document giving guidance on those criteria for suitable nominations.

b) 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 listed in section 3.2 above have been met.

c) The Chair shall invite all Members to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.

d) 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.

4.4. The Chair (or another nominated Councillor) shall prior to the issuing of the meeting calling notice for the purpose of passing a motion relating to the granting of the award, informally enquire with the proposed individual as to:

- a) whether or not they are prepared to accept such an award.
- b) 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.

4.5. 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. The following procedure shall be adopted:

- a) The Chair shall open the meeting and remind the Members of this Policy Document which gives guidance on the criteria for suitable nominations.
- b) 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 listed in section 3.2 above have been met.
- c) The Chair shall invite any members of the public who wish to speak in relation to the nomination to speak, subject to the following criteria:
- d) Council Standing Orders shall be followed
- e) Each member of the public may speak for a maximum of 5 minutes, and whom may speak only once during the meeting
- f) Members of Council may ask questions (with the agreement of the Chair), to 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.
- g) The public and any press shall then be excluded from the meeting.
- h) The Chair shall invite all Councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
- i) The public and any press shall then be invited to return for the remainder of the meeting.
- j) 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.
- k) 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.

4.6. If the motion is passed, the Chair in consultation with the Parish 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:

- a) Albeit that the bestowing of the Freedom of the Parish actually occurs at the point the Parish Council resolves to grant the Freedom, the presentation ceremony marks the occasion in a public and dignified way.
- b) 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 assembly, village fete or another public event.
- c) The presentation would usually be made by the Parish Council Chairman with other Councillors present.
- d) Following the presentation, an opportunity should be provided for the recipient to reply.

- e) 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/Honorary Freewoman.
- f) Photographs should be taken to record both events and placed on the Parish Council website and within the Council's archive.

4.7. The roll of Honorary Freemen / Freewomen shall be maintained by the Parish Clerk and shall be publicly displayed.