

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel and Council
MEETING DATE:	12 th September and 15 th September 2011
TITLE:	DRAFT SCHEME FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN AND HONORARY ALDERWOMEN OF BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Draft Scheme for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen Appendix 2 – Former Members of Bath and North East Somerset Council who ceased to be Councillors following the May 2011 Council Elections and their Years of Council Service Appendix 3 – Former Wansdyke Area Councillors with 12 or More Years Unbroken Service who served on Bath and North East Somerset Council up to 2007	

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Political Group Leaders have asked for consideration to be given to the establishment of a Scheme for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Bath and North East Somerset to recognise the contribution to the community made by former long serving councillors.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 For the Panel

2.1.1 The Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to recommend to Council whether a Scheme for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, subject to any views the Panel may wish to convey to the Council on the proposal and in particular on the questions raised in the report about:

- (1) The number of years qualifying service – should it be 12 years (3 terms) or 8 years (2 terms)? (paragraph 4.3)
- (2) Should only unbroken service or cumulative service be counted? (paragraph 4.4)

- (3) Should the service counted be only on Bath and North East Somerset Council and one of its predecessor authorities or should service on a principal local authority (unitary, county or district council) anywhere in the UK be eligible? (paragraph 4.4)
- (4) What should be the implementation date for the nomination of eligible candidates to be appointed as Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen – is it those who ceased to be councillors after the May 2011 Council Elections or does the Council wish to include eligible former councillors who left office at the 2007 or earlier Council Elections? (paragraphs 4.8 to 4.10)

2.2 For Council

2.2.1 Council is asked to consider the comments of the Panel which will be circulated to all Councillors after the Panel Meeting on the 12th September 2011

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of providing a Roll of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen to be signed by each former councillor appointed to the honorary office can be met from Legal and Democratic Services budgets. There are no other additional costs anticipated if the proposal is accepted as outlined which cannot be met from existing budgets.

4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Local Government Act 1972 gives councils the power to confer the title of Honorary Alderman or Honorary Alderwoman on “persons who have, in the opinion of the council, rendered eminent services to the council as past members.” To confer the title requires a special meeting of the Full Council to be held at which the decision to award the title is carried by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members voting on it.
- 4.2 Whilst the formal decision is subject to these rules, there is no requirement for the agreement in principle on which names should go forward to be decided formally. However, it would be prudent to have a working arrangement that secured sufficient informal agreement in advance amongst Councillors, to ensure that the formal decision at the Full Council Meeting at which the Aldermen/Alderwomen were appointed, would be carried without challenge. If a decision was taken to appoint Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen, in order to achieve a consensus on those to be appointed, one option would be for the list of candidates to be agreed and put forward on a recommendation to the Full Council from the Leader of the Council, following consultation with the other Political Group Leaders. This is the basis of the draft Scheme set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 If the decision is made to appoint Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen, consideration needs to be given to the qualifying criteria. The draft Scheme set out in Appendix 1 is based on length of service of either 3 terms as a councillor or having been the Chair of the Council. This is equivalent to the arrangements which the Charter Trustees of the City of Bath have for nominating Honorary Aldermen of the City (see paragraph 4.7 below).

- 4.4 A decision needs to be made on how the length of service is counted: Does it only apply to B&NES Council or any of its 3 predecessor councils or would service on any other principal local authority also count? Must the period of service be unbroken or does cumulative service qualify?
- 4.5 The Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen appointed by the former Bath City Council and (within the B&NES area) the former Avon County Council automatically became Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen of Bath and North East Somerset under the transitional regulations when those councils ceased to exist in 1996. Wansdyke Council did not appoint any Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen. Bath and North East Somerset Council has not appointed any Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen in its own right since 1996.
- 4.6 There are no rights or privileges specified in law for Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen. Because councillors of Bath and North East Somerset Council do not wear civic robes it is not proposed that the Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen should wear civic robes or medals.
- 4.7 The Charter Trustees of the City of Bath have a scheme for appointing as Honorary Aldermen of the City former mayors or councillors who have served at least three terms in office (12 years). Their names are inscribed in the Roll of Honorary Aldermen of the City of Bath and the Trustees have decided to award them a number of civic privileges relating to that role.
- 4.8 If a decision is made to proceed with the appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen by this Council, it would be necessary to decide which former councillors to honour in that way.
- 4.9 A list of those who ceased to be councillors at the May 2011 Council Elections which indicates their periods of service on this and other local authorities is attached as Appendix 2.
- 4.10 As the former Wansdyke Council did not appoint Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen, unlike the other two predecessor authorities Avon County and Bath City Councils, the view may be taken that there is a wish to honour long serving councillors in the Wansdyke area who ceased to be councillors at the May 2007 or earlier Council Elections. A list of those former councillors with 12 or more years unbroken service on B&NES Council and the former Wansdyke Council is attached as Appendix 3.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 Having regard to the Council's decision making risk management guidance no risks have been identified in respect of this proposal.

6 EQUALITIES

- 6.1 This proposal would improve the Council's arrangements for giving public recognition to long and exceptional service to the community by former councillors.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Political Group Leaders have been consulted on the principle of making a scheme and are in agreement with it.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Public recognition of distinguished service by former councillors would acknowledge their contribution to the local community and thereby contribute towards improving social cohesion and the corporate image and identity of the Council.

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Chief Executive, the Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and the Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Vernon Hitchman, Divisional Director Legal and Democratic Services tel 01225 395171
Background papers	None
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