



D O W N H A M
M A R K E T

TOWN COUNCIL

**POLICY FOR
GRANTING OF THE HONORARY FREEDOM
OF THE TOWN**

Date of Adoption: 19 March 2024

Revision: Every three years or in line with changes in legislation

POLICY FOR GRANTING OF THE HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE TOWN

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the criteria, procedures and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for Honorary Freemen or Freewomen and the Granting of Freedom of the Town to individuals.

2. CONFERRING THE TITLE

Granting the Freedom of the Town is the highest honour that the Town can bestow. Although it carries no powers or privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman or Freewoman.

As this is the highest honour that the Town can grant it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often to preserve its status and value.

3. CRITERIA

There is no statutory guidance that sets out any criteria for the appointment of Freemen and Freewomen. As the Freedom of the Town is awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the Town, it would be inappropriate to set out strict judging criteria. Instead, guidance the attributes that successful candidates would be expected to have demonstrated is outlined within this policy.

The title will not be conferred, or considered, for a councillor, contractor, or employee of the Council whilst still acting as a councillor, contractor or employee. The award cannot be granted posthumously.

Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, allows a relevant authority (including a Parish and Town Council) to admit to be Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the place or area for which it is the authority:

- i) Persons of distinction, and
- ii) Persons who have in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent service to that place or area.

3.1 A resolution must be passed:

- At a meeting of the Council that has been convened for the purpose and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of the award has been given; and
- By not less than two-thirds of the members of the Council who vote on it.

4. COST

Section 249(9) of Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend “such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an

address to a person on whom the authority has conferred the title of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman under subsection (5) above". Currently there is no budget for this, but under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 the costs of the scroll and frame can be allocated.

5. PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING FREEDOM OF DOWNHAM MARKET

- 5.1 Any nomination must be made by a serving Town Councillor in writing to the Town Clerk. A resident of the Town may petition any councillor to nominate an individual or individuals for consideration.
- 5.2 Individuals who have profited from their service would not normally be eligible, however this is subject to the discretion of the Council.
- 5.3 The nomination for the Honorary title will be considered at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council. The name(s) of the individual(s) must **not** appear in the agenda or minutes of the meeting. The following procedure shall be adopted:
- 5.4 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 inquire with the proposed individual(s) to:
- Whether or not they are prepared to accept the award.
 - 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 Town or Council into disrepute.
- 5.5 A meeting of the Council will be convened for the purpose, and where notice of the object of the meeting to pass a motion relating to the granting of an award to a specific individual(s) has been given. The following procedure shall be adopted:
- i) The Chair shall open the agenda item and remind councillors of this Policy Document which gives guidance on the criteria for suitable nominations. This discussion will be held under **confidentiality** and will therefore **exclude** members of the press and public.
 - ii) The Chair shall invite the councillor (the sponsor) to present the application for nomination. The councillor (sponsor) making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria have been met.
 - iii) The Chair shall invite the member(s) of the public who petitioned the councillor (sponsor) in relation to the nomination, to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes. The member(s) of the public will then be **excluded** for part (iv) of the Policy, namely the discussion and debate by councillors.
 - iv) The Chair shall invite all councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
 - v) The public and any press shall then be invited to **return** for the remainder of the meeting.

- vi) 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.
 - vii) If the Council passes the resolution by no less than two-thirds majority then the resolution shall be recorded in the Council minutes in the usual way.
- 5.6 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:
- Albeit the bestowing of the Freedom of the Town actually occurs at the point the Council resolves to grant the Freedom. However, the presentation ceremony to mark the occasion will be held in a public and dignified way.
 - The presentation will usually be made by the Town Mayor 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 invited members of the public and guests to offer their congratulations to the newly appointed Honorary Freeman/Honorary Freewoman.
 - Photographs should be taken to record both events and placed on the Town Council website and within the Council's archives.
- 5.7 The roll of Honorary Freeman/Freewomen shall be maintained by the Town Clerk.

END