

Report to: Honorary Aldermen Nominations Committee
Council

Date: 4 March 2009
4 March 2009

Subject: Review of appointment of Honorary Aldermen criteria
and update on outstanding nominations

Report of: Principal Committee Officer

Contact officer: Christine Charnock-Jones - 01942 827156

Purpose / summary: To review the existing criteria for the eligibility for appointment as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough as approved by the Council at minute 45 (September 2006).

To review the position of outstanding nominations.

To reconsider the appointment of Mr D M Brown as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: The alternative option is not to review the criteria and not to consider the three persons referred to in this report for the position of Honorary Alderman.

Recommendation / decision: (1) The Honorary Aldermen Nominations Committee is requested to recommend to the Council any changes to the existing eligibility criteria for appointment as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough as approved by the Council at minute 45 (September 2006).

(2) The Council is requested to agree to any changes to the existing eligibility criteria for appointment as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough as approved at minute 45 (September 2006).

(3) Based on the existing criteria, the Honorary

Aldermen Nominations Committee is requested to recommend to the Council, the position in relation to former Councillors D M Brown, J A O'Neill and B M Wilson.

(4) The Council is requested to note the position in relation to the three former Members of the Council as recommended by the Honorary Aldermen Nominations Committee and reported verbally by the Chairman of the Committee at the Council meeting.

(5) Should any appointments be made, the Council is also recommended

- to agree to hold a special meeting of the Council to be held at 7.00 p.m. on 29 April 2009 for the purpose of formally conferring the title of Honorary Alderman;
- to suspend Rule of Procedure 1.1(iii) to allow the normal meeting of the Council previously fixed for 29 April 2009 to be held following the special meeting; and
- to approve the provision of appropriate refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour prior to the special meetings of the Council referred to above.

Key Decision:

This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	None
Staffing:	None
Policy:	None
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	No
Wards affected:	All

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation? No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local

population? A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure? A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
Hon. Ald. Nom. Cttee – 4 March 2009			4 March 2009

Background:

1 Existing Criteria

The Council at minute 45 (September 2006) approved the following criteria for appointment of Honorary Aldermen:

- (a) The person being considered no longer holds the position of Councillor. (If re-elected the holder must forfeit that position).
- (b) The person must have served as a Councillor of the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan for an overall minimum period of 12 years.
- (c) The person must have made a *significant contribution to the Council and the people it represents.

*Significant Contribution – A significant contribution must have been made in at least two of the following areas for an accumulated period of not less than ten years.

- i Chair of Key Committee (Prior to Local Government Act 2000) or a Cabinet Member.
- ii Mayor/Deputy Mayor.
- iii Leading role on Council Panels/Committees e.g. Overview and Scrutiny, Best Value, Audit/Governance and Improvement Review.
- iv Greater Manchester Districts' bodies – Greater Manchester Police Authority; Greater Manchester Fire Authority; Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority; Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority; Manchester Airport.
- v Regional/National bodies e.g. North West Regional Assembly, Local Government Association.
- vi Appointments to NHS bodies e.g. Acute Trust, Primary Care Trust, Patient and Public Involvement Forum.
- vii Voluntary and community organisations e.g. CAB; CVS; DIAS; Wigan and Chorley Groundwork Trust.
- viii Leading figure as Ward Councillor in the local community/township by virtue of posts held e.g. township forum, school governor; member of local charities; community forum; township community safety group.

2 Review of existing criteria

It has been suggested, that the Committee review the existing criteria for selection of the position of Honorary Aldermen or replace it with something more meaningful. The position of Alderman was abolished under the Local Government Act 1972, which Act empowered local authorities to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on anyone who had given eminent service as a

past Member of the Council and who could then be invited to attend civic ceremonies.

I enclose at appendix 1, information gathered from other Local Authorities setting out their arrangements for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen.

I also attach at appendix 2 an extract from the provisions of the 2008 Government White Paper 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power,' which emphasises the importance of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen.

3 To review the position of outstanding nominations.

Following the decision of Council at minute 37 (i) (September 2008):-

former Councillor J A O'Neill has requested that the title of Honorary Alderman be deferred for the time being; and

former Councillor B M Wilson did not wish to accept the honour, but was most grateful for the kind thought.

4 To reconsider the appointment of Mr D M Brown as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough.

The Council has received a letter from former Councillor D M Brown expressing his disappointment at not being offered the title of Honorary Alderman in view of his past service.

The Committee has also been requested to consider again the contribution of former Councillor D M Brown to the Council during his period on the Council. His service is set out below:-

Ex Councillor D M Brown was first elected to the Langtree ward in 1992 (and from 2004, Shevington with Lower Ground ward). He was Deputy Lead Member for Scrutiny and a Special Interest Member on the then Community Safety Panel. He had also served on the Finance, Highways and Works, Licensing, Recreation and Amenities, Regulation and Social Services Committees and the Community Protection Panel. He was Chairman of the Standish, Aspull and Shevington Township Community Safety Group and was a member of the Security Patrol Task Group. He was also a School Governor at Shevington High School.

The Committee at its meetings on 5 September and 31 October 2007 (minutes 4 and 7 refer) considered that although ex Councillor Brown met the approved criteria in terms of his length of service on the Council, he did not meet that part of the criteria which related to 'significant contribution' to the Council and the people it represents.

Proposals:

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To review the position of outstanding nominations.

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Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:

The alternative option is not to review the criteria and not to consider the three persons referred to in this report for the position of Honorary Alderman.

Recommendation:

(1) The Honorary Aldermen Nominations Committee is requested to recommend to the Council any changes to the existing eligibility criteria for appointment as an Honorary Alderman of this Borough as approved by the Council at minute 45 (September 2006).

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Authority	Hon Alderman arrangements
Bolton	Member must have at least 20 years service and give an undertaking that they will not seek re election in the future. Procedure from Bolton attached.
Bury	Do not have any Honorary Aldermen
Blackpool	Don't have any Honorary Alderman but acknowledge Empowerment White Paper could change this.
Chorley	No response
Halton	<p>They hold the ceremony and reception together in the Stobart Stadium in the evening.</p> <p>The ceremony is held on stage.</p> <p>The Civic Party and Honorary Alderman enter the hall as a fanfare is sounded.</p> <p>There would be an opening blessing by the Mayor's Chaplain</p> <p>There would be a welcome by the Mayor</p> <p>The Mayor, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Honorary Alderman would be escorted onto the stage as a second fanfare is sounded.</p> <p>There would be opening remarks by the Leader of the Council</p> <p>The Deputy Leader would formally introduce the new Honorary Alderman</p> <p>The Chief Executive would read the citation.</p> <p>The Mayor makes the presentation of the framed scroll of honour (assisted by the Mayor's Attendant). The New Honorary Alderman, the Mayor and the Chief Executive then sign the Roll of Honour. The new Honorary Alderman would then respond.</p> <p>Following the proceedings the party would leave the stage, led by the Mayor's Attendant carrying the Mace, as the fanfare sounds.</p> <p>A formal reception would follow (a 3/4 course dinner)</p>
Knowsley	Whilst Honorary Aldermen have no legal, social or royal

	<p>precedence, they can be used to support the office of Mayor. Such people can be encouraged to attend en masse all civic ceremonial events when invited, and can support the work of the Mayor's charity. Similarly, when invited, they can provide valuable support in hosting receptions and promoting civic pride and the Council. The last Conferment of the Title of Honorary Aldermen of the Borough of Knowsley took place in 2000.</p> <p>As no documentation is available for this event</p> <p>Honorary Aldermen could be invited to the following Civic Functions (varies from Authority to Authority:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Mayor's Installation ❑ Civic Sunday ❑ Remembrance Sunday ❑ Mayor's Charity Dinner Dance ❑ Honorary Freedom of the Borough and Honorary Aldermen of the Borough Ceremonies ❑ Various "one-off" events e.g. Unitary and Silver Jubilee Celebrations
<p>Lancs County Contact is r.jones@lancs.gov.uk</p>	<p>They have a special meeting every 4 years to coincide with retirement of Members.</p> <p>Honorary Alderman is offered a scroll. Leader has discretion who to nominate They do not have a Committee for Honorary Alderman it is just by mutual agreement. No criteria</p>
<p>Manchester</p>	<p>There is a full ceremony at a special meeting of the Council at which an inscribed silver salver is presented. A Council Summons is attached for event.</p> <p>The award is considered by the Constitutional and Nomination Committee that makes a recommendation to the City Council. Until last year the qualifying service that would trigger consideration was set at 30 years. Manchester have always considered this to be an unusual figure and have argued that 28 years would be better to reflect a multiple of 4 year terms.</p> <p>The change has now prevailed.</p>
<p>Oldham</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Rochdale</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>St Helens</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Salford</p>	<p>Do not have any Honorary Aldermen</p>

Stockport	Do not have any Honorary Aldermen
Tameside	<p>Do not have a formal process, only have 4 Honorary Aldermen.</p> <p>All 4 have been long serving Councillors recently retired from their Council duties. The nomination has been put forward by the controlling group and approved by Full Council.</p> <p>Ceremony follows that of Freeman and an illuminated scroll and gift are presented.</p>
Trafford	No response
Warrington	No response
West Lancs	No response

Making it easier for you to stand for office

48. The proportion of councillors who are women, under-25 or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is far lower than their proportion of the population. We want to see **a wider range of people standing for election** to their local council. A taskforce chaired by Baroness Uddin is working to help more black and minority ethnic women become councillors. Programmes such as Operation Black Vote are using a shadowing scheme to encourage more black people to become councillors, magistrates and school governors. We will **amend the Widdicombe rules** which forbid council workers above a certain salary band from being active in party politics.
49. We will give **backbench councillors more powers** to make changes in their ward with discretionary localised budgets that they can target on ward priorities. We will support authorities in enabling councillors with caring responsibilities and others to participate in meetings and vote remotely.
50. We want people to serve in a range of civic roles. Councillors, magistrates, school governors and others are already entitled to request reasonable **time off work for their public duties**. Working with employers, we will consult on extending that right to people serving on a range of other important public boards such as members of court boards or boards of housing associations.
51. People may be prevented from standing for public office because they are afraid of losing their job if they are elected. Employers often overestimate the time involved and underestimate the skills acquired in a civic role. So we are working with employer organisations on an **employers' information pack**.
52. Many councillors would like to see **a formal qualification** that recognised their work. We will review existing qualifications and modules to develop a system of formal accreditation at different skill levels. We will encourage councils to use their existing powers **to create Aldermen from experienced former councillors and enable the use of the new title of 'Alderwoman'**.

Powers for councillors

- 7.17 Councils already have powers to delegate **discretionary localised budgets for councillors** to allocate to local groups or services. This allows councillors to target their budget on the concerns they judge to be the highest priorities of local electorates, and we would encourage all councils to make use of this power. Councillors may, of course, use participatory budgeting techniques to decide how to spend their budget.
- 7.18 Section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 allows councils to make arrangements so that individual councillors can exercise more power in their ward. A local councillor could, for example, have the power to get a dumped fridge in the local park removed. This will enable councillors to assist their constituents in a way that sees quick and direct results, giving local councillors powers to get things done.

Support for councillors

- 7.19 The Councillors Commission recognised the need for councils to provide more effective support to councillors; and to organise council business in ways that make the best use of councillors' time. We welcome the work that the local government sector is doing here.
- 7.20 We want to support authorities in modernising the way they do business by legislating to enable councillors with caring responsibilities and others, for example those with long journey times, to use information and communication technology **to participate in meetings and vote remotely**. Any such arrangements would need to be balanced with measures to preserve accountability and transparency, so that citizens can remain confident that they are being properly represented by their local councillor.

Aldermen and Alderwomen

- 7.21 When councillors lose their seats or retire, often their experience and knowledge is lost to local government. We want more councils to recognise the contribution of former councillors, and encourage their continuing involvement through existing powers to create Aldermen but also through new powers which we will introduce to enable the use of the title of 'Alderwoman'. An Alderman or Alderwoman is a former elected councillor of good standing, having usually

served at least two full terms of office, who has provided distinguished service. Aldermen and women should be able to use the prefix to their name Alderman, Alderwomen or Ald. instead of Councillor or Cllr.

- 7.22 By recognising their contribution and creating a way in which they can continue to contribute their skills and abilities, we hope that a greater proportion of long-standing councillors will be less reluctant to retire from office and thus create more opportunities for new councillors to stand in seats.

Other ways to serve the local community

- 7.23 There are many more ways to serve the local community than being an elected councillor. We want to open up the opportunities to serve on the other local committees and boards which direct local services. We want the pool of people serving their communities in this way to be deepened and for a refreshing blast of common sense to be applied to decision-making.
- 7.24 In some places there are not enough people with the incentives, knowledge or desire to serve on boards or committees. For example 12 per cent of England's 350,000 school governor places are vacant, with a quarter of places unfilled in some of the poorest and most deprived areas.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2006) *Briefing Information Sheet – School Governing Bodies: Roles, Responsibilities and Membership*, London: DCSF.