

**TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To: COUNCIL MEETING  
11 March 2009**

**From: Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Betton**

**Ward Members: All**

**Subject: POLICY FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY  
ALDERMEN**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider a policy for the appointment of honorary aldermen, from among the Council membership, any such appointments to be made and to take effect on the abolition of Teesdale District Council.
- 1.2 It is not the intention to approve specific appointments at this meeting. By law, a Special Meeting of the Council, specifically convened for this sole purpose, is required. Arrangements have been made for this Special Meeting of the Council to immediately follow this one. The only business to be undertaken at this Special Meeting will be to consider and approve honorary alderman appointments.
- 1.3 It is proposed that any such appointments approved at the Special Meeting will be conferred at the final Council Meeting on 25 March 2009.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Council:**

**2.1.1 adopts a policy whereby members who have served for a minimum of three terms be nominated for appointment as honorary aldermen;**

**2.1.2 considers and approves specific appointments, in line with this policy, at a Special Meeting to be held immediately following this meeting;**

**2.1.3 confers any such appointments at the final Council Meeting on 25 March 2009.**

**3.0 LINK TO CORPORATE KEY PRIORITIES/AMBITIONS**

- 3.1 **Priority:** Improving Together.

- 3.2 **Ambition:** Be effective community leaders.
- 3.3 **Outcome:** Recognition of the commitment and achievements of individual members.

#### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The legal position, prior to November 2008, was provided for in Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. This enabled a local authority to confer the title of honorary alderman on a former member 'in recognition of eminent services' rendered by that member.
- 4.2 This Council has conferred the title on seven of its former members during its 35 years' existence. The title is purely honorary and confers no rights or obligations on a member other than a right (or an expectation that they be invited) to attend any civic ceremonies which may be held from time to time. Honorary aldermen have no involvement in the decision-making process and have no entitlement to receive any allowances payable to members.
- 4.3 The legal position has been amended by The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No. 2) Regulations 2008 which came into effect on 28 November 2008 and which permit past **or serving** members of the Council who have rendered 'eminent services' to the Council to be appointed as honorary aldermen. The law has been enacted to provide for continuity in terms of local links albeit at a purely ceremonial level.
- 4.4 Any honorary aldermen appointed by the Council (either past or as part of this process) will become honorary aldermen of Durham County Council on and as from 1 April 2009. The exception to this is that any member who is, or becomes, a member of Durham County Council cannot be regarded as an honorary alderman during the period that he/she is a serving councillor.
- 4.5 It is a statutory requirement that a meeting of the Council 'specially convened for the purpose' is held to consider the nomination of a member to be appointed as an honorary alderman. For a nomination to be approved, it is necessary that it be accepted by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting on the motion.
- 4.6 Under Paragraph 10(2) of the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007, it is clear that members do not have a prejudicial interest when considering any ceremonial honour given to members. All members may therefore participate in the vote even if they have been nominated for appointment as an honorary alderman.
- 4.7 The sole criterion specified in the legislation is that a member should have given 'eminent service' to the Council. The term is not defined in the Act and there is no statutory guidance to Councils to assist them in

interpreting its meaning. Councils have generally adopted length of service as a key criterion in considering nominations and this has generally been the approach adopted by this Council.

4.8 Discussions have been held, initially with group leaders, followed by a consultation with all members, to gauge views on how this matter should be handled. As part of this consideration, regard was had to the practice adopted elsewhere, most notably, that applied by Durham County Council, which has adopted a policy whereby a member should have served for a minimum of three terms (normally twelve years) before being considered for appointment as an honorary alderman.

4.9 It is considered appropriate that this Council adopts the same policy as its successor authority and it is recommended, therefore, that members who have served for three terms, that is, elected in 1999 or earlier (the current term has been reduced to two years because of local government reorganisation), be considered for nomination as honorary aldermen.

## **5.0 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

5.1 Financial Implications: All expenses can be met from existing budgets.

5.2 Risk:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Council does not exercise its ability to recognise eminent service by members	Personnel Reputation	Lack of acknowledgment of members' commitment and service.

5.3 Equality and Diversity: Adoption of a policy ensures equitable application of the legislation.

5.4 Human Resources: None.

5.5 Community Safety: None.

5.6 Legal Issues: The Council has the power, under the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) to appoint honorary aldermen.

### **Background papers:**

Legislation referred to in the report.

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