



## **Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee**

**Date:** 7 July 2021

**Title:** Honorary Alderman Scheme for Buckinghamshire Council

**Author:** Nick Graham, Director Legal and Democratic Services

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Recommendation:** That Full Council be invited to:

- a) Adopt the proposed Buckinghamshire Council Honorary Alderman Scheme as set out at appendix 'C' to the report, noting it will be subject to a review prior to the 2025 Unitary Elections, and authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to insert the Scheme into the Council's Constitution.
- b) Note that future nominations for Honorary Alderman status be in accordance with the proposed scheme.
- c) Consider whether or not to continue with the Honorary Alderman status for the individual identified set out in paragraph 3.6 of the report.

### **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 Buckinghamshire Council does not currently have an Honorary Aldermen Scheme. This report provides background to the title of 'Honorary Alderman' and proposes a new Scheme for the Council.

### **2. Background**

2.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 gives principal councils the power to confer the title of 'Honorary Alderman' on persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past members of that Council, but who are no longer members of the council (politically inactive). The Act does not specify how eminent services are defined, and this is left as a matter of local interpretation.

- 2.2 The Act also provides that in order to confer the title of Honorary Alderman on an ex-Councillor, a meeting of the whole Council needs to be convened specifically for this purpose and the resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the voting Members present at that meeting
- 2.3 The role of an Honorary Alderman can be provided with certain privileges and rights, which can vary. For example, these can include receiving a copy of the Full Council summons, a badge/certificate marking the role, and invitations to all civic events, etc.
- 2.4 The role of Honorary Alderman is an apolitical role and an individual therefore must not hold any political office, such as a Councillor, parish councillor, MP, etc.

### **3. Legacy Buckinghamshire Councils - Schemes**

- 3.1 Buckinghamshire County Council, Wycombe District Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, and Chiltern District Council, all had an Honorary Alderman Scheme. South Bucks District Council did not operate one. Set out at appendix A to this report is a table summarising the Legacy Councils Schemes.
- 3.2 The Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008 provide for the continuation of the conferment of Honorary Aldermen status from legacy Councils to a new Authority. Section 32 of these Regulations specifically sets out this provision. To this end, Honorary Aldermen from the 5 legacy Buckinghamshire Authorities became Aldermen for Buckinghamshire wef 1 April 2020. As a result, 32 Honorary Aldermen continued and a list is provided at Appendix B to this report.
- 3.3 Prior to their abolition on 31 March 2020, both Wycombe District Council and Chiltern District agreed to confer the status of Honorary Aldermen to 11 individuals, who were retiring Members who qualified under their respective schemes. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the postponement of the May 2020 Elections, the 'retiring' members continued on as Buckinghamshire Councillors and as a result these decisions to confer the Honorary Aldermen status on these individuals was not acted upon. A list of these individuals is also included in appendix B to this report. As a result, there is now a total of 43 Honorary Aldermen after the elections on 6 May.
- 3.4 Mr Alan Sherwell, and Mr Peter Cartwright, two existing Honorary Aldermen from the legacy Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe District Councils respectively, stood for election to the Council at the May 2021 Elections. Both were not elected to the Council. Mr Cartwright was conferred the Honorary Alderman status by the former Wycombe District Council Scheme, which set out that, "in the event of an Honorary Alderman seeking election to the District Council, or any other Council within the area, he or she shall, from the time this scheme is adopted, cease to hold the position of Honorary Alderman if he or she is still standing as a candidate immediately following the deadline for withdrawal of candidature. At that time the entitlement to such rights and privileges attached to the position of Honorary

Alderman shall cease automatically."

- 3.5 The former Aylesbury Vale District Council Scheme that conferred the Alderman status to Mr Sherwell did not require an Alderman to stand down upon being confirmed as a candidate at an election, only should an individual be elected. Therefore, Mr Sherwell's status as an Honorary Alderman is unaffected.
- 3.6 The Committee is invited to consider whether Mr Cartwright should be invited to continue with Honorary Alderman status under the provisions of the new proposed Scheme for the Council.

### **A Proposed New Scheme for The Council**

- 3.7 Set out at appendix C to this report is a proposed new Honorary Alderman Scheme for the Council. The Scheme is in accordance with the legislation and has sought to build on the legacy Schemes operated by the legacy Buckinghamshire Councils. The proposal is that the new Scheme will apply to all Honorary Alderman so those Aldermen who have continued from the legacy Councils and Aldermen that may be appointed by Buckinghamshire Council, to ensure a consistent approach and Scheme is in place. The Scheme will be subject to a review prior to the next Unitary Council election in 2025.

### **Legal and Financial Implications**

- 3.8 The proposed Scheme at Appendix C is in accordance with the legislation. Should the proposed Scheme be agreed, any future nominations for Honorary Alderman status would have to be made in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme.
- 3.9 Costs associated with the establishment of the Scheme would relate to the purchase of badges for Honorary Aldermen, costs of which could be absorbed within existing budgets.

### **Next Steps**

- 3.10 This is a new Scheme for the Council, and it is proposed that the Scheme also forms part of the Council's Constitution. As a result, the recommendations of this Committee will be reported to Full Council for their consideration and adoption.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Table Summarising Legacy Councils' Schemes

Appendix B – List of Existing Honorary Alderman

Appendix C – Proposed New Scheme For Buckinghamshire Council