FREEDOM OF THE PARISH POLICY

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Issue Number	Date	Details of amendments
1	27th January 2025	No Change

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the criteria, procedure and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for granting of Freedom of Parish of East Grinstead to individuals.

2. Legislation

2.1 The Town Council has a power under Section 249 (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to confer the Freedom of the Parish on any person who of the place or area for which it is the authority.

3. Criteria

3.1 There is no statutory guidance that sets out any criteria for the appointment of Freemen and Freewomen.

3.2 As the Freedom of the Parish is awarded in recognition of exceptional service to the Parish, it would be inappropriate to set out strict judging criteria. However, when considering a person, or persons, for Freedom of the Parish of East Grinstead the following should be considered:

- There must be, or have been, a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to the Parish, or
- The person or persons will be making, or have made, a major contribution to parish life and in doing so have enhanced the reputation of the Parish.

3.3 The commitment, or contribution, to the community will be expected to have been:

- delivered in a way that has brought distinction to Parish life and enhanced the Parish's reputation in the area or activity concerned,
- contributed in a way to improve the lives of those less able to help themselves, in particular the young, the elderly and vulnerable persons living within the Parish; or
- demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship which is delivering results in the Parish. The title will not be conferred, or considered, for a member, contractor, or employee of the council whilst still acting as a councillor, contractor or employee.

4. Cost

4.1 Section 249(9) of Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend "such reasonable sum as it thinks fit" on presenting a casket or address to a Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman.

4.2 The Town Council has determined that in order to mark the award of Freedom of the Parish, a framed commemorative 'scroll' or certificate will be provided to the recipient.

5. Procedure for Granting of Freedom of the Parish

5.1 In keeping with the special nature of the award it shall be strictly limited to residents from any walk of life who have made a very significant voluntary contribution to East Grinstead Parish and who have demonstrated "service above self", or a significant national contribution relative to East Grinstead Parish.

5.2 It would be expected that the nominee will have given extensive and distinguished service to the community e.g. service to other organisations, voluntary and community groups, in a largely voluntary capacity. The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution to the Parish so as the nominee's contribution can be demonstrably seen to stand head and shoulders above the contributions made by most other people.

5.3 The Town Council's decision on the award of the title is final and no discussion or correspondence will be entered into on the matter.

5.4 There is no limit to the number of nominations or holders of the title, but the nature of the nomination criteria means it is unlikely that the honour will be frequently awarded and will therefore remain distinctive. The award will be conferred for the life of the title holder but is not hereditary in nature.

5.5 Nominations must be made by a serving Town Councillor, though any local resident may approach a Councillor and recommend a nomination. Nominations must be made by a Councillor in writing to the Town Clerk.

5.6 All nominations of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman are to be treated in the strictest of confidence. The nominee should not be informed that they have been nominated as it is not fair to raise expectations in case they are not met. It is imperative that submissions are not discussed with any other persons. Any disclosure will make the application invalid.

5.7 Once a nomination has been received it will be considered by a meeting at the next Full Council meeting. This discussion will be held under 'confidential business' and will therefore exclude members of the public. The whole Council must resolve by at least a two-thirds majority that the distinction of 'Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Parish of East Grinstead' be conferred upon the nominee.

5.8 Following a recommendation by Full Council that an award is justified the title of 'Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Parish of East Grinstead' will be granted by the Town Mayor and the title holder presented with a scroll/certificate citing the grounds for the award.

5.9 The presentation of a scroll/certificate would be made by the Town Mayor at a suitable appropriate event. A copy of the scroll will be held on record by the Town Clerk. The title holder will be able to style themselves 'Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Parish of East Grinstead'. The title does not convey any legal or financial privileges on the holder.

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