

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Conferment of the Titles of Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman: Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972

Meeting/Date: Special Council – 29th October 2014

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

Report by: Corporate Team Manager

Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

In 2010 the Council resolved to introduce the titles of Honorary Alderman and Honorary Alderwoman for current and future Members of the Council who cumulatively have served a specific number of years as an elected Councillor on the District Council. The criteria upon which future Alderman should be selected was revisited by the Council in April 2013 and it was agreed that the title should be awarded for 12 years cumulative service on the District Council. The Council also took the view that the title could also be awarded in other circumstances as the Council might decide.

Recommendation:

On the recommendation of the Council Programme Group and in recognition of their outstanding contribution to Huntingdonshire and their dedicated years of public service, it is

RECOMMENDED

that the Council, in sincere appreciation of distinguished public service to the District and people of Huntingdonshire and to the wards of Yaxley & Farcet, Buckden, Brampton and Elton & Folksworth, resolves under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer the title of Honorary Alderwoman and Honorary Alderman on former Councillors Mrs Madhabi Banerjee, William Clough, Peter Downes and Nicholas Guyatt.

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

1.1 Nominations for the titles of Alderman/Woman are considered annually by the Council Programme Group. Having regard to the existing criteria, the Group nominated former Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, W T Clough, P J Downes and N J Guyatt as potential recipients of the title at their meeting in July. All have subsequently indicated that they would be pleased to accept the honour.

1.2 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that -

"a principal Council may, by a resolution passed by **not less than two thirds of the Members voting thereon at a meeting specially convened for the purpose** with notice of the object confer the title of Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen 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 not then Councillors of the Council".

1.3 Should the Council bestow the honour of Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman, the incumbents would enjoy the courtesy title of Alderman/Alderwoman, would be so addressed and may receive invitations to civic functions such as the Chairman's Ball, Reception, Carol Service, etc as the Council may from time to time decide. No other specific rights are granted with the title and no financial allowance is payable. In addition, an Honorary Alderman/Alderwoman shall not have the right to attend meetings of the Council or a Committee or Panel of the Council other than as a member of the public.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Former Councillor **Mrs Madhabi Banerjee** was not returned to office following the election in May 2014. Mrs Banerjee had served three full terms of office as Ward Councillor for Yaxley & Farcet Ward having been first elected in 2000 and retained her seat in the whole District election in 2004. Over this period, Mrs Banerjee served on the Cabinet as the Executive Councillor for the Environment, as Chairman of the Elections Panel and as Vice Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well Being). Although contributing to a wide range of Council activities over the years from Hinchingsbrooke Country Park to Sawtry Leisure Centre, in more recent times she became a very experienced Member of the Development Management Panel and continued to champion the cause of her ward and all matters relating to the environment.

2.2 **Terry Clough** was first elected to represent Buckden Ward in 1994. After a two year break from 2006 to 2008, Terry was re-elected in 2008 and continued to represent his Ward until his retirement in May. Once Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Terry became a planning expert having served on the Development Management Panel, Section 106 and Policy Advisory Groups over this period. His calm manner and even handedness was particularly appreciated during the original standards regime when he participated in a number of hearings and assessment panels. Although not in the best of health in his later years, Terry continued to make a valuable contribution to the Council up to his retirement.

2.3 Former Councillor **Peter Downes** resigned as Ward Councillor for Brampton in March 2013 to devote more time to his County Council responsibilities and to pursue his interest in education. Peter was first elected in November 1997 and contributed with both wit and intelligence to most Council Committees and Panels over 15 years as a District Councillor. Most notably perhaps was his

work, for two years, as one of the first Chairman of an Overview & Scrutiny Panel at a time when the Council was trying to get to grips with the notion of Overview & Scrutiny! But it was in Council meetings that Peter made most impact as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, keeping the Leader of the time on his toes during debates on the budget and with questions about the decisions of the Cabinet and other Panels.

- 2.4 **Nick Guyatt** – following his first election to the office as Councillor for Elton Ward in 1998, Nick undertook a number of roles for the Council that included Vice Chairman of Finance & General Purposes, Chairman of Personnel, various portfolio responsibilities namely Resources, Welfare, Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport and finally Strategic Planning and Housing not forgetting Deputy Executive Leader! Having stepped down in 2007, Nick returned as Ward Councillor to the Elton & Folksworth Ward in 2010. It is perhaps for his work since 2010 that Nick is entitled to receive the gratitude of the Council. He took the lead in planning and transportation matters at a time when some significant and strategic projects required his expertise and ability to influence and operate at a regional and national level notably in relation to Alconbury, the A14 and latterly the wider Cambridgeshire Transport Strategy.

3. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no legal or resource implications arising from this proposal. Should the Council indicate their support for the recommendation, a scroll and badge/brooch will be presented to those honoured and as discussed earlier, the recipients will be invited to civic functions such as the Chairman's Ball, Reception, Carol Service, etc as the Council may from time to time decide.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Nominations for the honour were made by the cross party Council Programme Group. The Group was authorised by the Council to consider candidates for the award on an annual basis. It was the Council's view that the honour should recognise an individual's outstanding contribution to the activities of the Council and the wellbeing of the District rather than loyalty to a political party.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of the Corporate Governance Panel and Council – September 2010 and March/April 2013

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