

Bristol City Council

Audit Committee

29 January 2016

Agenda item 17

Report of: Interim Service Director – Legal & Democratic Services

Title: Criteria for the Appointment of Honorary Aldermen

Ward: Citywide

Officer presenting report: Interim Service Manager Legal & Democratic Services

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Recommendation

Members are requested to consider the draft criteria set out at paragraph 9 with a view to recommending amended criteria for approval by full Council.

Summary

To enable Members to consider reviewing the existing criteria for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen following a request at a previous meeting of the Audit Committee that there be more specific guidance to be applied in respect of future nominations.

It is likely that a number of new nominations will be forthcoming following the elections in May 2016 and so a review of criteria at this point is timely.

Context

1. Under section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council may confer the title of Honorary Alderman upon former Members of the Council who, in the opinion of the Council have rendered “eminent service” to the Council as a past Member of the authority or a predecessor authority.
2. The resolution to confer the title must be passed by a majority of at least two thirds of Members present at a specially convened full Council meeting.

3. The Act does not define “eminent service” to the Council and it is therefore at the discretion of individual Councils to determine what this might constitute for their individual authority. A number of Councils have developed criteria designed to ensure a consistency of approach whilst at the same time allowing the flexibility to recognise what might constitute “eminent service” to the Council in all its many forms.
4. Members have previously approved the following policy and criteria for nominations for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen at Bristol City Council:

A minimum period of ten years’ service or having served in a position of significant public responsibility on behalf of the Council or for a Bristol Ward on the former Avon County Council.

5. Responsibility for ensuring all Honorary Aldermen nominations meet these criteria originally sat with the Standards Committee and is now the responsibility of the Audit Committee in its role of ensuring ethical standards and probity within the City Council.
6. At the meeting of the Audit Committee on the 25 September 2015 Members agreed to consider the current nominations for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen, subject to clearer guidelines for future nominations. This report addresses that request and suggests new guidelines for consideration. Formal approval to any changes will be required by full Council.
7. Appendix A sets out the criteria and guidance adopted by a number of other Councils, which gives Members an indication of the approach adopted elsewhere. In the majority of instances “eminent service” is defined either by a minimum duration of service as an Elected Member and /or by holding specified positions of responsibility.
8. At present the Council’s policy provides for a minimum period of service of 10 years **OR** alternatively that members have served in a position of special responsibility either with Bristol City Council or the former Avon County Council.
9. To assist in the review Members may wish to consider the following draft criteria to define “eminent service to the Council” for future nominations:

An individual will be eligible for nomination and appointment to the role of Honorary Alderman provided that he/she is no longer a serving Councillor with Bristol City Council and has provided eminent service to the Council throughout a long and

distinguished period of public service by either:

- a. Serving as a Bristol City Councillor for an aggregate total period of at least 10 years:**
or
- b. Holding a significant position of public responsibility with Bristol City Council as either:**
 - **Lord Mayor;**
 - **Elected Mayor;**
 - **Deputy or Assistant Mayor;**
 - **Leader of the Council;**
 - **Executive Member;**
 - **Any other position attracting the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance under the Council's Approved Members Allowance Scheme (excluding attendance at Appeals Committee);**

In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider that an Individual who would not normally be eligible to be nominated has made such an outstanding contribution to public life that it is appropriate to waive the above criteria.

10. An Honorary Alderman may attend and take part in civic ceremonies but are not entitled to receive any member allowances or other payments, including expenses. A serving City Councillor cannot be made an Honorary Alderman but the Act does make provision for such an individual to be re-elected as a Councillor. If this happens then the Act specifies that the Alderman is not entitled to be addressed as an Honorary Alderman or take part in any civic ceremonies in that role.

11. Honorary Aldermen may substitute for the Lord Mayor or Deputy Lord Mayor on occasion and are invited to all major civic events, church services and Council Meetings, but have no other formal role. From time to time an Honorary Alderman may be nominated by the Council's Outside Bodies Committee to serve as the Council's representative.

12. The Council has agreed that the Honorary Alderman's Association should be supported, but no that no support should be provided for individual Aldermen.

Other Options Considered

Not applicable

Legal and Resource Implications

As detailed above

Appendices:

Appendix A – Criteria and guidance adopted by a number of other Councils

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None

NOTE: Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 does not define the phrase "Eminent Services". Even the dictionary adds only "distinguished" and "notable". Accordingly individual councils have set their own rules and criteria for the nomination and appointment of Honorary Aldermen.

Most Councils that have adopted the practice of appointing Honorary Alderman do so on a strictly limited basis, to recognise the exceptional service of people who have reached the end of their political careers.

East Staffordshire	Democratic Services provide a list of members who have stood down in the previous 4 years and their eminent service (ie chairman of committees, mayoral appointments etc) to a meeting of the Honorary Aldermen Panel who ultimately decide who to confer the honour on.
Cheshire West and Chester	A minimum of 12 years' service as a councillor and/or service as Leader of Council or Chairman of Council. Nominated to the Audit & Governance Committee then to council.
Lancaster	A Minimum 15 years' service as a Councillor
South Somerset	A Minimum 12 years' service as a Councillor. Nominations made by PGL. In exceptional circumstances may agree to waive minimum 12 years criteria
Colchester	Former Councillors who have either acquired at least 20 years service as Members of the Council or who have held the office of Mayor of the Borough. Groups make nominations to Officers. The Governance Committee makes a formal recommendation to the next Full Council meeting. A Special Full Council is held to confer the title on the nominees.
Oxfordshire	Has made a significant contribution in public life - Has given notable service on behalf of the Council, which has enhanced the reputation of Councillors and the Council itself - Has rendered a minimum of 12 years service as a Member – and Is no longer politically active.
Preston City Council	A minimum of 15 years' service. Any former member who qualifies will then be considered by an ad hoc Task and Finish Group established to consider whether that person rendered eminent services to the council when he/she was a member.
Swansea	<p>a) Those former Councillors who have served within the boundaries of the City and County of Swansea providing that they: i) Do not intend returning or have failed to be re-elected as Councillors within the City and County of Swansea and that; ii) They have held the position of Lord Mayor of the City and County of Swansea or Lord Mayor / Mayor / Chair of the Council or any of the predecessor Authorities of the City and County of Swansea.</p> <p>b) Any individual that the Council deems appropriate.</p>

Wolverhampton	Reduced from 24 years' service as a Councillor to 20 years in 2010.
Birmingham CC	A minimum of 15 years' service as a Councillor or 12 if the Member has chaired a major Committee
Kent	A minimum of at least 12 years' service and has rendered eminent services in terms of the individual's contribution to the activities of the County Council and the well-being of the County of Kent.
Bath & North East Somerset	12 cumulative years' service as a Councillor or, if they have served for a lesser period, to have occupied the position of the Chair of Bath and North East Somerset Council during their period as a councillor. (This requirement can be varied to recognise exceptional service that does not meet the qualifying period upon the recommendation of the Leader of the Council). The names of the former councillors proposed for this honour shall be presented to Full Council upon the recommendation of the Leader of the Council following consultation with the other Political Group Leaders.
Guildford Borough Council	A minimum service as a Councillor of an aggregate total period of 12 years and has given eminent service to the Council. This includes (but is not limited to) the following offices, Mayor, Leader of the Council, Executive Member/ Lead Councillor, Committee Chairman