

BIDDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL



Biddenham Parish Council
Freedom of the Parish Policy
September 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out recommendations relating to the selection and appointment process for Honorary Freemen and Freewomen and the Granting of Freedom of the Parish to individuals. Granting the Freedom is the highest honour that Biddenham Parish Council ('the Council') can bestow. Although it carries no privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman or Freewoman. As this is the highest honour that the Council can grant it should be used sparingly and should not be given too often in order to preserve its status and value.

2. LEGISLATION

Section 249 (5) of Local Government Act 1972, as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Act 2009, allows a relevant authority (including a town or parish council) to admit to be honorary freemen or honorary freewomen of the place or area for which it is the authority:

- a. Persons of distinction, and
- b. Persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent service to that place or area.

A resolution must be passed:

- a. At a meeting of the Council that has been specially convened for the purpose and where notice of the object of the meeting has been given; and
- b. By not less than two-thirds of the members of the Council who vote on it.

3. NOMINATIONS

Any member of the Council may nominate persons who in their opinion have rendered exceptional service to the parish and are worthy of the honorary title. A group of no less than 10 local electors may also petition a Council member to make a nomination on their behalf. Nominations for the honorary title must set out in writing the reasons for the nomination. The councillor making a nomination for the honorary title needs to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in the next section have been met. The process must be conducted in the strictest confidence until such time as the nominee approved by the Council has confirmed his or her willingness to accept the honorary title and the appropriate public announcement is made by the Council.

4. CRITERIA

Candidates should have a strong and continuing connection with and commitment to the parish of Biddenham or have made a major contribution to community life. The honour should not be awarded simply for meeting certain milestones but in recognition of exceptional contributions. The candidate's contribution should be seen to stand above the contributions made by most other people. To be considered, the nominee should meet two or more of the following criteria:

- a. acted in a way that has shown significant distinction in parish life
- b. enhanced the parish's reputation in the area or activity concerned
- c. contributed a service that improves the lives of Biddenham parishioners or those less able to help themselves
- d. demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship that is delivering results in the parish.

5. CONSIDERATION

At a meeting of the Council, called in line with Standing Orders, at the given agenda item the following procedure shall be adopted:

- a. The Chairman shall open the agenda item and remind the members of the policy.
- b. The Chairman shall invite the sponsor to present the application for nomination.
- c. The Chairman shall invite all members to debate the merits of the nomination.
- d. The Chairman shall then invite the Council to pass the resolution, which should recite the particular grounds upon which the Council have come to their decision and details of the public services rendered by the recipient.
- e. If the Council passes the resolution by no less than a two thirds majority then the resolution shall be recorded in the Council Minutes in the usual way.
- f. The Chairman shall then make arrangements for the formal presentation of the 'Freedom' which will be marked by the giving of a framed certificate or scroll.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Section 249 (6) of Local Government Act 1972 allows Councils to spend "such reasonable sum as they see fit" on presenting an address to Honorary Freemen or Freewomen.

7. PRESENTATION

The bestowing of the Freedom of the Parish actually occurs at the point the Council passes the resolution, but the presentation ceremony marks the occasion in a public way. The presentation would usually be made by the Chairman in the presence of other members at a suitable public event, which could include an annual meeting of the council. Photographs should be taken to record the event and placed on the Council website.