

<b>FULL COUNCIL</b>	<b>30 JULY 2020</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 16</b>
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**Report prepared by Angie Price, Town Clerk**

## **FREEDOM OF THE TOWN**

### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to ask Members to give consideration to establishing a protocol for the purpose of awarding Freedom of the Town to an individual or group of distinction for services to the town of Ledbury.

### **Detailed Information**

The historic origins of freemen or burgesses can be traced back many centuries to the former municipal corporations in the twelfth and thirteenth century. At that time, freemen enjoyed considerable privileges, including the ability to elect officers of the corporation and its Parliamentary representatives. For the municipal boroughs to appoint men of national importance was not merely an act of recognition; these individuals could possibly secure economic or political benefit.

However, major changes to the role and influence of freemen were swept away by the Municipal Corporations Act 1835. This led, among other things, to the creation of an elected local government as we know it today.

Freedoms could not be granted until the passing of the Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act 1885 and following the major reorganisation of local government at that time, (but interestingly only from 1980 when a 'gap' in the provisions of the 1972 Act was rectified by representations made by the then MP for Chichester, Anthony Nelson MP), just 10 local Parish councils then had the standing to confer the title of honorary freeman.

In England these were the councils of Chichester, Ely, Hereford, Lichfield, Ripon, Truro, and Wells. In Wales, these were the Cities of Bangor and St David's and the Royal Town of Caernarfon.

However, with effect from 12 January 2010, **all** parish councils may now exercise powers to confer the title of "honorary freeman" or "honorary freewoman" upon what the legislation refers to as "persons of distinction" and those who, in the council's opinion, "have rendered eminent services to the council's area" (section 249(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1972 Act).

The admission of an honorary freeman or honorary freewoman must be given by a resolution made at a meeting of the full council that is specially convened for such

purpose. The resolution must be passed by no than less than two-thirds of the members of the council voting (Section 249(8) of the 1972 Act).

The law also requires “notice of the object of the meeting” to be given. A local council may also spend a reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting what the act refers to as “an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom it has conferred the title of honorary freeman or honorary freewoman”.

It is often the practice of the Council to maintain a list of Honorary Freemen of the Town on display on a board in the Council Offices.

### **Criteria for Qualification**

Should Ledbury Town Council agree to establishing a protocol in respect of Freedom of the Town awards, they will need to decide on the criteria for qualification. The following suggestions are often considered as part of the criteria:

- The candidate has made an outstanding contribution to the local community;
- The candidate has made achievements in their chosen sport resulting in World or Olympic titles or represented their nation at the highest level.
- The candidate has been a Town Councillor for 25-years;
- The candidate has achieved significant artistic/cultural/theatrical/scientific status on a world stage (e.g. Nobel price, Oscar etc.)

Attached is a draft Policy for Members consideration.

### Recommendation

1. That Councillors agree to establishing a protocol for the awarding of Freedom of the Town to an individual or group of distinction.
2. That consideration be given to the attached draft protocol with a view to its adoption.