

Honorary Freedom of the Parish Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hatfield Peverel Parish Council recognises the ongoing efforts of members of the community who demonstrate outstanding commitment to the wellbeing within the parish.
- 1.2 The Council has the option to recognise such commitment where individuals qualify and meet the criteria set out within this policy, by awarding to an individual the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the parish of Hatfield Peverel and Nounsley.
- 1.3 Such awards are made using powers contained within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and Local Government Act 1972 ss. 248-249, in which Councils were given the right to grant honorary Freedoms in their area of jurisdiction.
- 1.4 This document sets out the criteria, procedure and arrangements relating to the selection and appointment process for the granting of Freedom of the Parish to individuals.

2. Granting the Freedom of the Parish

- 2.1 Granting the Freedom of the Parish is the highest honour that the Parish Council can bestow. Although it carries no powers, rights or privileges, those who receive the honour are able to use the title of Freeman or Freewoman.
- 2.2 As this is the highest honour that the Parish Council can grant, it should be used sparingly in order to preserve its status and value.

3. Nomination Criteria

- 3.1 There is no statutory guidance that sets out any criteria for the appointment of Freeman and Freewomen.
- 3.2 Preference will be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to any person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected for their occupation, including uniformed services.
- 3.3 All nominees should have carried out their largely voluntary roles for a significant period of time.
- 3.4 Nominees must be or have been a resident within the parish area.
- 3.5 Current or former elected Members will not usually be considered, but will not be arbitrarily discounted; such Members could be considered for dedicated voluntary or charity works within the parish.
- 3.6 Current or former staff members will not usually be considered, but cannot be arbitrarily discounted.
- 3.7 The contribution to the community should involve one or more of the following:

- (i) A significant allocation of the person's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their wellbeing.
- (ii) The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made.
- (iii) Sustained or continued involvement in voluntary or charitable works.
- (iv) Bravery.
- (v) Outstanding acts that promote the parish.
- (vi) Outstanding sporting achievement.

4. Nomination Procedure

- 4.1 Any Parish Councillor may nominate to the Council any individual(s) who, in their opinion, have rendered eminent services to the Parish and who should be considered to be granted the Freedom of the Parish.
- 4.2 A member of the public may petition any Parish Councillor to nominate an individual to the Council individuals for consideration.
- 4.3 Nominations should be made in the strictest confidence without the nominee's knowledge.
- 4.4 Nominations must be made in writing (letter or email) to the Parish Clerk and supported by evidence of the contribution made by the individual to the community and any other examples of service which justifies the honour.
- 4.5 The Parish Clerk will convene a meeting of the Council especially for the purpose. The following procedure shall be followed:
 - (i) The Chairman shall open the meeting and remind the Members of this Policy which gives guidance on the criteria for suitable nominations.
 - (ii) The Chairman shall invite the Member ("the sponsor") to present the application for nomination. The Member(s) of the Council making a nomination for the Honorary title should be able to demonstrate to the Council that the criteria listed in this Policy have been met.
 - (iii) The Chairman shall invite any members of the public who wish to speak in relation to the nomination to speak, subject to the Council's Standing Orders.
 - (iv) A resolution will be passed to exclude the press and public from the meeting.
 - (v) The Chairman shall invite all Councillors present to discuss and debate the merits of the nomination.
 - (vi) The Chairman shall then invite the Council to pass a resolution granting the award, which should recite the particular grounds and details of the public services rendered by the potential recipient.
 - (vii) 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 manner.

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4.6 The Chairman (or another nominated Councillor) shall, prior to the issue of the agenda of the meeting where the granting of the award will be discussed, informally enquire with the proposed individual(s) as to:

(i) Whether or not they are prepared to accept such an award.

(ii) Whether they are aware of any reason that their acceptance of the award may, or could be considered by a reasonable third party, to bring the Parish Council into disrepute.

4.7 The Roll of Honorary Freemen/Freewomen shall be maintained by the Parish Clerk and shall be publicly displayed.

5. Entitlement

5.1 Individuals cannot nominate themselves for the Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the Parish.

5.2 Awards can be made at any time as the Council sees fit.

5.3 A framed certificate signed by the serving Chairman and Parish Clerk will be presented to the recipient.

6. Withdrawal

6.1 Any person nominated who is deemed by the Council to have brought the office or reputation of the Council into disrepute may have the designation withdrawn.

6.2 No fewer than two thirds of those present and voting, at a formal vote, must agree the withdrawal.

6.3 In the case of any legal issue, the Parish Clerk will obtain legal advice from the Essex Association of Local Councils.

Signed (Chairman):

Date: 2nd October 2023

Reviewed: 12th May 2025

Reviewed: 11th May 2026