



Houghton Regis Town Council

Honorary Freeman and Freewoman Policy

Date of Approval:	9 th October 2017
Date of Review:	19 th December 2022

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1. Policy Statement

From time to time, members of the community demonstrate outstanding commitment and contribution to the wellbeing of the town and it is recognised that their efforts should be acknowledged.

The Council will do this, in circumstances that meet the criteria of this policy, by awarding to an individual the title of ‘Honorary Freeman’ or ‘Honorary Freewoman’ of the town of Houghton Regis.

This honour will be awarded on rare and exceptional occasions.

2. Qualification

The nominee may have given extensive and eminent service to the town of Houghton Regis and its local community in a largely voluntary capacity. For example, service to the Town Council (councilors or officers), service to the town of Houghton Regis or service to other organizations, voluntary and community groups.

The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution such that the nominee’s contribution can be seen to stand above the contributions made by most other people.

3. Legislation

The Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allows all local councils to exercise powers to confer the title of “honorary freeman” or “honorary freewoman” to persons of distinction and those who, in the Council’s opinion, have rendered eminent services to the Council’s area.

Section 249(8) of the 1972 Act as amended provides that the administration of an honorary freeman or honorary freewoman must be by resolution made at a meeting of the full Council specially convened for such purpose and passed by no fewer than two-thirds of the Members of the Council.

The regulations also state that the Clerk of the Council must make the Notice of the Meeting to show that a decision needs to be taken to “Confer the title of Honorary Freeman or Freewoman of the Town of Houghton Regis”.

Section 249(9) of the 1972 Act (as amended) provides that a local council may spend a reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom it has conferred the title of honorary freeman or freewoman.

4. Nomination Criteria

The following will be taken into account when consideration is given to granting the honour of Honorary Freeman (or Honorary Freewoman) of the town:

1. Preference will be given to a person who performs in a voluntary capacity, but this should not preclude the honour being awarded to a person whose dedication and contribution is significantly above that expected from their occupation.
2. Nominees need not necessarily be residents of Houghton Regis.
3. The award will not be restricted to town councillors or town council staff.
4. Any nominated town councillor should have retired from the post unless there are special circumstances.
5. The contribution to the wellbeing of the community must involve one or more of the following factors:-
 - a) A significant allocation of the person's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their wellbeing.
 - b) The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made.
 - c) The contribution must be outstanding in that it can be seen to stand above the contributions of most other persons.
 - d) Someone who has excelled in a specific role or work area that brings respect to the town and acts as a role model within the community of Houghton Regis.
 - e) Someone who champions Houghton Regis and is a credit to the town.

5. Nomination Procedure

1. Nominations must be made in the strictest confidence without the nominee's knowledge.
2. Any resident or elector of the town may make a nomination but it must be sponsored by a town councillor.
3. Nominations must be made in writing to the town clerk by 31st August each year.
4. There must be evidence based by outlining the voluntary service provided by the individual to the community and any other examples of 'community spirit' to justify the honour.
5. On receipt of a nomination, the nomination will be circulated to all councillors for confidential consideration.
6. Councillors' reasons for any objection to a nomination must be given.
7. If councillors are in agreement that the nominee should be made an Honorary Freeman (or Freewoman) of the town, the nominee will be invited to accept the honour.
8. If agreed, the nomination will then be put before Council at a specially convened meeting (usually before 30th September) and a formal vote taken, again in confidence.
9. No fewer than two-thirds of the town councillors must agree the nomination.
10. The decisions of the Council on all nominations (whether affirmative or negative) are final.

6. Entitlements

Any person declared an Honorary Freeman (or Honorary Freewoman) of the town may designate himself/herself 'Honorary Freeman (or Freewoman) of the Town of Houghton Regis'.

The award shall be made at a small ceremony which may take place at a Council meeting or other suitable event.

A scroll will be presented to the recipient.

7. Limitation on Holders of Award

At any one time, up to four persons, unless otherwise decided by the Council, may hold the title 'Honorary Freeman (or Freewoman) of the Town of Houghton Regis'.

8. Review

Review of this policy will be carried out every 4 years by Town Council unless circumstances dictate otherwise.