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ROLE AND CRITERIA FOR HONORARY ALDERMEN

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1. Purpose

1.1 To review the criteria for granting former Members of the Council the title of Honorary Alderman and to consider a possible future role for the Council's Aldermen.

2. Summary

2.1 The Council's present criteria for being elected as an Honorary Alderman requires a former Member of the Council or its constituent authorities to have a minimum of 15 years service. It takes no account of former Members having held senior positions, such as Mayor.

2.2 The Council is facing a considerable period of change which will require it to review its democratic management structures and its management of ethical issues. Both these matters are likely to feature independent persons, either as part of the scrutiny process or by membership of the Council's Standards Committee. The persons ideally should have some knowledge of the Council and associated issues. Honorary Aldermen could well have the experience and knowledge to contribute usefully to these processes. Honorary Aldermen could also become members of any independent panels established by the Council, to consider such matters as Members' Allowances or Members' Services.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the criteria for appointment to the position of Honorary Aldermen be as follows:

- (a) a person, not being a Member of the Council, who has served as a Member of the Council and/or its former constituent authorities for at least 15 years; and
- (b) a person, not being a Member of the Council, who has been elected Mayor of the Council or Mayor/Chairman of its former constituent authorities.

3.2 That the potential use of the Council's Honorary Aldermen as part of the Council's scrutiny function, as Members of the Standards Committee, or as members of any independent panels established by the Council, be approved in principle for detailed consideration as part of the Council's review of democratic management structures.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 The Leader of the Council has requested that the criteria for the election of Honorary Aldermen be reviewed and consideration be given to an enhanced role for the Council's Aldermen.
- 4.2 The Council may, in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, elect to the position of 'Honorary Alderman' past members of the Council, who, in the opinion of the Council, have rendered eminent service.
- 4.3 The Council last reviewed the criteria for the election of Honorary Aldermen in 1995, when it was resolved that the service qualification for Honorary Aldermen be reduced from twenty years to fifteen years, and that this decision be retrospective in relation to any former Councillor of Milton Keynes Council. This criterion was later extended to include ex-Councillors of constituent authorities (Minute PR52/96 refers).
- 4.4 The position of Honorary Alderman confers no rights or privileges other than to receive a copy of the summons to meetings of the full Council and invitations to various civic events, such as the Civic Service and the Mayor's Annual Dinner.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 When the Council last reviewed the criteria for the election of Honorary Aldermen, the Council chose not to include all former Mayors of the Council or Chairmen of former constituent authorities, unless they had completed at least 15 years' service. However, this is a criterion which could be legitimately considered to recognise the contribution by past Mayors to both the Council and the community.

- 5.2 If this criteria was to be adopted by the Council, the following former Mayors would be eligible for consideration:

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|-----|----------------------|---------|
| (a) | Sir Gerald Neale | 1976/77 |
| (b) | Mrs Joan Butterworth | 1982/83 |
| (c) | Mr William Jones | 1983/84 |
| (d) | Miss Betty Hanks | 1990/91 |
| (e) | Mr Les Hostler | 1993/94 |

Research into past Chairmen of the constituent authorities will be carried out if the Committee decides to accept the criterion.

- 5.3 Honorary Aldermen have no formal role in the Council, but because of their length of service and positions held, they hold a unique position in that they are no longer formally connected to the Council, other than in the capacity of Alderman, but have experience and knowledge of Council services, procedures and culture.

5.4 With the impending changes to the democratic management of local authorities and the ethical responsibilities to be imposed on Councils under forthcoming legislation, there will be a number of opportunities for independent persons with experience and knowledge of the Council. The Council's Aldermen would seem to have the relevant experience and knowledge to undertake such roles as independent members:

(a) on the Council's Standards Committee; and

(b) of scrutiny bodies.

5.5 Another possibility would be to use the Council's Aldermen to form part of independent panels to consider, for example, Members' Allowances or services.

5.6 The Aldermen could bring their experience and knowledge of the Council to these processes and be of considerable help, not only in being able to understand the issues, but also in helping and guiding any other independent persons involved, as they come to understand the internal working of the Council.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

None.

6.2 Equalities

None.

6.3 Financial

If the Council is to use independent persons in its processes, it will be necessary to meet their expenses, which could involve a financial loss allowance. All budgets concerned with democratic representation are under pressure and any potential increase in expenditure will need to be planned in future years' budgets.

6.4 Legal

The Council, under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, is able to elect Honorary Aldermen.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 With potential roles being imposed on the Council by impending legislation, it is likely that the Council will be using more independent persons to fulfil its scrutiny and ethical management roles. Honorary Aldermen could help the Council to undertake this function.

Background Papers: None