Meeting of the Alderman & Freeman Scheme Working Group  
Tuesday 27 August 2019  
2.00 p.m. Leader’s Briefing Room

Present:  
Cllr R G Boyce, MBE, Chairman (RGB)  
Cllr A S Fluker (ASF)  
Cllr M Helm (MH)  
Cllr S White (SW)  
Cllr S Nunn (SN)  
Simon Quelch (SQ)  
Susan Hylands (notes)

1. Welcome and Introductions

RGB welcomed Members to the meeting and advised that the purpose of the Working Group is to introduce the concept of appointing honorary Aldermen/Women and Freemen/Women to the District. Council has agreed to consider both schemes. RGB would like to focus on the Freeman Scheme.

2. Statutory Framework

SQ tabled the statutory framework and provided an overview. The Local Government Act 1972 S2.49 in regard to the Freeman Scheme states that Council can admit people of distinction and/or persons who have rendered eminent services to that place or area. To confer the title two thirds of Council Members need to be present and voting at a Council meeting. SN provided detail on the experience of Maldon Town Council which runs a Freeman Scheme. A Committee considers recommendations; to date of six recommendations only one has gone forward to Council and been awarded. The meeting debated the process; it was considered that the expectation would be Council would approve any nominations that were put forward by a Sub-Committee and that only nominations recommended by the Sub-Committee would be put forward. Once nominations were recommended the agreement of the nominee would be sought prior to submitting to Council to avoid the possibility of a nominee refusing the award.

Recommendation:

i. Nomination to be made to the Sub-Committee  
ii. Sub-Committee to consider nomination.  
iii. If unanimous positive outcome, nominee to be contacted prior to recommendation to Council to confirm they would accept the award, with the caveat given that the award is subject to ratification by Council.  
iv. Sub-Committee to report to Council on positive recommendations only.  
v. Council to consider in P&C (Council must comprise two thirds of Members present & voting)  
vi. If Council agrees recommendation by a two thirds majority then recipient is invited to the next meeting to receive the award in public.

The meeting discussed the process for receiving nominations and reviewed the process followed by Maldon Town Council. It was considered that the criteria of 25 years to reflect eminent services was restrictive although the Terms of Reference should emphasise that the award is by exception.

Recommendation:
i. **Criteria of MTC to be amended to remove the 25 year criteria and then adopted.**

ii. **District Councillors can accept nominations and put to the Sub Committee.**

iii. **Nominations can also be made by voluntary groups.**

The composition of the Sub-Committee was discussed. It was suggested the membership comprise the Chairman and Leader of MDC, four Members of the District Council and two representatives from the voluntary sector appointed by the Sub-Committee. The ToR will be agreed by Council and a discussion ensued around whether the Sub-Committee could appoint its own members from the voluntary sector. After discussion SQ confirmed that this question could be overcome. Some suggestions were made for possible representatives to join the Sub-Committee i.e. lead volunteer from Stow Maries, Women’s Institute etc.

**Recommendation:** That the Working Group comprises six members; four Councillors including the Chairman & Leader and the WG will appoint its own two voluntary sector members on an annual basis.

The meeting moved to discussing the Alderman Scheme. This applies to past Members only and is usually time constrained, the feeling of the Working Group was that the focus should be on the Freeman Scheme. The Council resolution was for the Working Group to consider both schemes and produce a criteria for assessment. The meeting discussed and agreed to report to Council that their recommendation was that the Freeman Scheme could include past Councillors and as such there is no need to consider the Alderman Scheme separately.

**Recommendation:** That the Council focus on the Freeman/Woman Scheme and does not pursue the setting up of the Alderman Scheme as it is believed that the Freeman’s Scheme would encompass this.

3. **Initial Discussion on the Criteria for Nominating Alderman/Freeman**

Covered in main by the discussions outlined above. The meeting reiterated that the award is by exception and occasional. There is a need to consider what the award amounts to. There is no power conferred. There would be an expectation that Freemen would be able invited to attend civic events and Statutory Annual and Christmas meetings of Council.

4. **Initial Discussion on the Nature of the Award**

SQ provided an overview of the legislation. The meeting reviewed the awards made by the Town Council and considered possibilities. It was thought that a framed certificate and other appropriate token such as a medal could be issued in addition to the invitation to civic events. A notary budget provision will need to be identified. The report will require some identification of cost and the consent of Council will be required to use the Council seal on any certificate.

5. **Frequency/Date of Next Meeting**

Next meeting date to be agreed subsequent to the notes being circulated. Terms of Reference to be agreed at the next meeting.