



# **FREEDOM OF THE VILLAGE POLICY**

*As adopted at a meeting of Meppershall Parish Council on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022*

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## DOCUMENT AMENDMENT HISTORY

<b>Revision No.</b>	<b>Originator of change</b>	<b>Date of change</b>	<b>Change Description</b>
v1.0	Clerk	Draft	Policy creation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. From 12 January 2010, all local councils may 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(5) and (6) of the 1972 Act).
- 1.2. From time to time, members of the community demonstrate outstanding commitment and contribution to the wellbeing of the Parish and it is recognised that their efforts should be acknowledged. The Meppershall Parish Council (MPC) will do this, in special circumstances that meet the criteria of this policy, by awarding to an individual the title of ‘Honorary Freeman (or Honorary Freewoman) of the Parish of Meppershall’. This honour will be awarded only on rare and exceptional occasions.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1. Individuals from all walks of life and all sections of the community who have made a difference to the Parish of Meppershall are eligible to be nominated as honorary freemen/freewomen.
- 2.2. Nominees need not necessarily be residents of Meppershall.
- 2.3. In keeping with the special nature of the award it shall be strictly limited to those who have made a very significant contribution to the community of Meppershall and who have demonstrated “service above self”.
- 2.4. The honour will be awarded for the individual’s lifetime and not as a hereditary award.
- 2.5. The maximum number of freemen or freewomen at any one time is not restricted.
- 2.6. It would be expected that the nominee will have given extensive and distinguished service to the community that goes beyond local government i.e., service to other organisations, voluntary and community groups, in a largely voluntary capacity.
- 2.7. The nominee must have made an outstanding contribution to the Village such as the nominee’s contribution can be seen to stand above the contributions made by most other people.
- 2.8. If the nomination is for that of a former Member of the Parish Council, then to be eligible for consideration, they must have served at least 3 terms of office (12 years) these do not have to have been consecutive.
- 2.9. Nominations will not be accepted for current serving members of the Town Council a suitable qualifying period of one month must have elapsed after resignation from the Council before a nomination is accepted.

## 3. NOMINATION CRITERIA

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

- 3.1.1. 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.
  - 3.1.2. All nominees should have carried out their largely voluntary roles for a period of at least 10 years, although in extraordinary circumstances, the Council may consider granting an honour for a lesser period of time.
- 3.2. The contribution to the wellbeing of the community must involve one or more of the following factors:
  - 3.2.1. A significant allocation of the person's time in serving members of the community for the improvement of their wellbeing.
  - 3.2.2. The promotion, achievement and/or delivery of community services in which a real personal contribution has been made.
  - 3.2.3. Whilst difficult to define, the contribution must be outstanding in that it can be seen to stand above the contributions of most other persons.

## **4. NOMINATION PROCEDURE**

- 4.1. Any resident or elector of the Parish of Meppershall may make a nomination but it must be sponsored by a Parish Councillor
- 4.2. Nominations must be made in writing to the Parish Clerk.
- 4.3. Nomination submissions should 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.
- 4.4. On receipt of a nomination, it will be circulated to all Councillors for confidential consideration and included in the next meeting agenda.
- 4.5. If the Councillors are in agreement that the nominee should be made an Honorary Freeman (or Freewoman) of the Parish, the nomination will be put before Council and a formal vote taken in confidence.
- 4.6. No fewer than two-thirds of the Parish Councillors must agree the nomination.
- 4.7. The decisions of the Council on all nominations (whether affirmative or negative) are final.
- 4.8. All nominations of honorary freeman are treated in the strictest of confidence. The nominee should not be informed that they have been nominated as it is not fair to raise expectations in case they are not met. It is imperative that submissions are not discussed with any other persons. Any disclosure will make the application invalid.

## **5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

- 5.1. An acknowledgement will be sent upon receipt of the nomination form. Correspondence will not be entered into on the merits of a particular nomination whilst it is under consideration.
- 5.2. All Councillors will be invited to discuss nominations received for the honorary freeman/freewoman. The Council may request further information from the proposer if required.

## **6. ENTITLEMENTS**

- 6.1. Any person declared an Honorary Freeman (or Honorary Freewoman) of the Parish may designate himself/herself 'Honorary Freeman' (or Freewoman) of the Parish of Meppershall'.
- 6.2. The award shall be made at a small ceremony which may take place at a Council meeting. A scroll will be presented to the recipient.
- 6.3. Any honorary freeman or freewoman of the Village shall be invited to all subsequent civic events and functions.
- 6.4. The award does not confer on any recipient any entitlements to attend, participate in meetings of the Parish Council, or carry out any role on behalf of MPC, or bestow any other entitlements, but is intended to be a recognition of the valuable contribution made by that person to the local community.

## **7. OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY**

- 7.1. The Parish Council may decide from time to time to acknowledge service to the community in a number of different ways. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - 7.1.1. Dedication of a bench and plaque
  - 7.1.2. Dedication of a tree and plaque