

## LEADER'S POLICY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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**Monday, 29th July, 2024**

**Present:** Councillors Munsif Dad BEM JP (in the Chair), Councillors Noordad Aziz, Zak Khan, Vanessa Alexander and Danny Cassidy

**Apologies** Councillors Kath Pratt and Kimberley Whitehead

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### **1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kath Pratt and Kimberley Whitehead.

Councillors Danny Cassidy and Vanessa Alexander acted as substitute representatives for their respective political groups.

### **2 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday, 16th January 2024 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

**Agreed** - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

### **3 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

*The following Agenda item was taken next at the meeting.*

### **4 Review of Members Expenses**

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) on Members allowances.

The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 governed the payment of members expenses. Payment of the following allowances was permitted:

Basic	This was compulsory. The same amount must be paid to all councillors.
Special Responsibility Allowance	This was discretionary. There was a list of duties and responsibilities for which SRA's could be paid.
Dependant Carer Allowance	This was discretionary. This could be made in respect of attendance at specific meetings or duties.
Travel Allowance	This was discretionary and was payable in respect of attendance at approved duties
Subsistence Allowance	This was discretionary and was payable in respect of attendance at approved duties for specific periods of time.

Any changes to the allowances scheme would have to be approved at full Council. When making changes to the allowances scheme the Council must have regard to the recommendations of its Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The Council was not required to accept the panel's recommendations in whole or part, but it must consider them before a decision was made.

The allowances scheme could provide for allowances to be reviewed annually by reference to an index (such as RPI) without the need to consult the remuneration panel, but this could only be done for 4 years and, after that, the panel would have to be convened if allowances were to be changed.

### Current Allowances

A copy of the Council's current scheme was appended to the report. It had not been amended significantly for several years.

### Review Process

If members wished to review the current allowances scheme the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) would arrange to convene the remuneration panel and would provide them with a written brief. The panel might review the scheme as a whole if it so chose, but there might be specific issues that the Board wanted to ask the panel to consider and make recommendations about, and these would be included in the written brief. As part of the review process the panel might wish to speak to a range of councillors to gather evidence about issues such as time commitment, costs incurred, etc. The panel would then make its findings and recommendations, and would set these out in a written report. This was the report that would be presented to full Council, should members wish to implement changes to the allowances scheme.

The Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) commented that travel, subsistence and carers allowance were seldom claimed. If these were regularly claimed by all entitled to such allowances, this could have significant budget implications. She noted that an SRA for the possible introduction of member champions had been raised recently.

Ms Ellis also gave a brief summary of the current membership of the IRP.

Historically, Hyndburn's basic allowance and SRAs had been higher than its peer group. The last full review report had recommended lowering allowances and deleting some SRAs, but this had not been agreed by the Council. Subsequently, allowances had 'withered on the vine' and were now comparable to Hyndburn's peers.

A discussion within this forum would provide an opportunity to reach a consensus across the political groups. Accordingly, the Board was invited to consider:

- whether it wished to ask the remuneration panel to review the members allowances scheme; and
- whether there were specific issues that it wished to ask the remuneration panel to consider.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, outlined four potential areas to include in a brief to the IRP, as follows:

- (a) The introduction of up to 4 Community Champions, in a similar style to those at Lancashire County Council. Members could bring back reports on specialist areas such as a youth, elderly or mental health matters.
- (b) Review of the SRAs for Deputy Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. There was a view that this role gave rise to only minimal additional responsibility and workload.
- (c) No increase to the level of basic allowance (subject to (e) below).
- (d) No change to the SRA available to the wider membership of Planning Committee. Member noted that councillors serving on this committee dealt with many applications and attended numerous site visits.

All members spoke in favour of the proposal at (a) above.

Councillor Alexander noted that claiming for travel, subsistence and carers allowances had historically been difficult, due to public perceptions. However, one possible outcome was that those in genuine financial need might have been unfairly dissuaded from claiming these funds. She added that the time might now be right to recommence index linked inflationary increases to allowances.

There was cross-party consensus that the claiming of any allowances by those eligible would not be publicised for party political gain.

Ms Ellis recapped on the items proposed to be included in the IRP brief with the addition of the following:

- (e) Reintroduction of an index for annual inflationary increases to allowances.

It was envisaged that the final report to Council would be available for the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

**Agreed** - **To request a review of members allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel and to approve the brief as outlined in points (a) to (e) above.**

## 5 **Boundary Review**

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's scheduled boundary review in Hyndburn.

The review would look at:

- The total number of councillors needed;
- The number of wards;
- The number of councillors per ward;
- Ward boundaries; and
- Ward names.

The review gave the Council a chance to consider whether it currently had too many councillors or too few, given the changing demands on councillors since the last review had

been carried out. The Council could look at matters such as changes to population, changes to its services, changes to its statutory responsibilities and the demands of its political management arrangements (e.g. how many councillors did the authority need to enable Cabinet and its Committees to operate effectively; and were councillor workloads manageable, etc). The Boundary Commission had produced guidance to support this process.

Since the last review the law had changed in respect of electoral arrangements. This meant that the Commission would require the Council to have three-member wards if it continued to hold elections by thirds. If the authority moved to “all out” elections every four years, it would be permitted to retain a mixed pattern of 1, 2 and 3 member wards. The electoral arrangements were a matter for the Council and would not be part of the review process. However, the electoral cycle would impact significantly upon the warding arrangements and the Commission had asked the Council to indicate before the review started whether the Council wished to change its electoral cycle or retain election by thirds.

The Council was required to submit a lot of preliminary information to the Commission when the review started e.g. detailed maps, population information, 5 year electorate forecasts.

The review would first consider how many councillors the Council needed. Both the Council and the individual political groups might submit a proposal to the Commission about this.

Having formed a view of councillor numbers, the Commission would then look at ward boundaries. The Commission would consult the Council and public about this before producing an initial proposal. There would then be further consultation on the draft proposal before final recommendations were produced by the Commission. The Commission’s recommendations would then be laid before Parliament in order to bring them into force at all out elections.

The Council had received an indicative timetable from the Commission, but this had slipped slightly as a result of the General Election and it might be that the authority would receive an updated timetable from them. However, in broad terms, the timings were expected to be as follows:

July 2024	Boundary Commission reps meet with Leader and portfolio holder
Autumn 2024	Boundary Commission presentation to Council
Spring 2025	Council / political groups submit size proposal Boundary Commission consults on ward boundaries etc
Summer / Autumn 2025	Boundary Commission publishes draft proposal and consults on these
Spring 2026	Boundary Commission publishes final proposals These then require Parliamentary approval (challengeable by Judicial Review)
May 2027	New boundaries etc implemented at all out elections

Ms Ellis would brief Corporate Management Team shortly on the key issues.

The Leader raised a number of points, as follows:-

- Councillors would be able to ask questions as part of the Commission’s presentation Council in September or November 2024.
- The two group leaders would need to have a discussion on the proposed electoral arrangements (by thirds or all out elections), as a two thirds majority decision by the Council was required to change the current arrangements.

- A view on the overall size of the Council would need to be finalised by Spring 2025, having regard to the above electoral arrangements.

Councillor Khan considered that it would be difficult to answer these points without the background information and options available. Ms Ellis confirmed that this information would be available in due course. However, an initial view on whether to elect by thirds or at all out elections every 4 years would be useful. The Commission would need this information by March 2025. Councillor Khan requested a paper to enable him to brief his group. Ms Ellis envisaged that the relevant points would be covered by the Commission's presentation at Council.

**Agreed**

- **That report on the Boundary review be noted and that representatives of the political groups will meet to seek to agree a common view on the proposed electoral arrangements.**

## **6 Webcasting of Meetings**

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on the webcasting of meetings.

Cllr Booth had recently asked officers to consider webcasting Cabinet and Council meetings. The previous Leader of the Council had also asked for this matter to be put to the Leaders Board after the local elections in 2024.

Unlike many other local authorities, the Council was currently unable to live stream or webcast meetings from the Council Chamber or QER to the internet. To film and livestream physical meetings, the Council would need to invest in a new technology solution with the necessary audio and video infrastructure.

Any such proposals would aim to achieve the following:

- good quality, reliable audio-visual technology for Council meetings;
- the webcasting of meetings to provide greater public access;
- compatibility and security with existing IT systems (including MS Teams);
- value for money; and
- be simple to operate, preferably by non-technical members of staff.

In 2022, officers had sought quotes from two companies who each provided this service to a large number of local authorities, Public-I and Auditel. The Council's then IT Manager had also been involved in the discussions with the two companies, which had focussed on enabling webcasting from the Council Chamber only.

A summary of the quotes and comparative information obtained at the time was provided as an Appendix to the report. Likely costs were in the region of £100k-£130k depending on the detailed specification. Both quotes involved the provision of smart cameras which focused automatically on the speakers.

Public-I's quote was given without a site visit. There might be elements in each quote which could change, including reductions in the more expensive specification (e.g. fewer screens). The quotes were no longer in date, but were provided as an indication of the likely investment needed to provide a webcasting service. On top of this, there would be additional staff time needed in operating the equipment. It should also be noted that the

quotes did not include consideration of webcasting meetings held in the QER, at Scaitcliffe House.

There had been a consensus among attendees at this Board meeting in January 2023 that webcasting was not a priority in that year due to the likely costs, but that the project would be reconsidered if it shifted to a higher priority in the future.

The Board was invited to consider whether it wished to request that officers carry out further work to investigate the possibility of providing webcasting in the Council Chamber and/or in Scaitcliffe House and the likely costs of the same.

It might be possible to save costs, for example, by installing the technology in the Council Chamber only. This might then involve moving Cabinet and some Committee meetings (such as Planning Committee) to the Council Chamber to enable them to be broadcast. There might be other benefits to this approach in terms of security, given the public seating arrangements in the Council Chamber.

The Leader of the Council observed that this type of system was in place at Lancashire County Council and was very effective. The costs were high, but webcasting would help to get the message out to constituents.

Councillor Aziz spoke in favour of the introduction of webcasting as a means of improving accountability by producing a formal record of the proceedings. He was aware that Blackburn with Darwen and South Ribble had procured Auditel equipment. He expressed the view that much of the expenditure would be the capital costs required for the initial installation. Councillor Alexander added a note of caution around the longevity of the equipment and software and about whether the number of meetings and viewing levels would justify the expenditure.

Councillors Khan and Cassidy were in favour of webcasting on the grounds of transparency. It was suggested that both leaders take the question back to their political groups for discussion with a view to a report being provided to the Council in the light of the potential costs.

Ms Ellis indicated that up to date costs would be sought. Councillor Aziz suggested that it would be useful to find out whether neighbouring councils used webcasting and what meetings were included in their service. Councillor Cassidy concurred with the earlier point about the longevity of the equipment.

**Agreed**

- (1) To request the officers to carry out further work to investigate the possibility of providing webcasting in the Council Chamber and/or in Scaitcliffe House and the likely costs of the same.**
- (2) Following the preparatory work undertaken by officers, the party leaders raise the question of webcasting within their own political groups, with a view to a debate being held at Council on the matter.**

## **7 Mayoral Car Quotes**

Members considered a verbal report by Jane Ellis, Executive Director, Legal & Democratic Services, in connection with the expiration of the mayoral car lease in 2025.

Ms Ellis reported that it might be necessary to seek a small budget increase for the lease of a new vehicle in 2025, as car prices had risen significantly. A number of quotes had been received, but were all above the current budget, particularly in view of the preference for hybrid vehicles.

Officers would bring a written update to the next meeting.

Councillor Aziz enquired if sponsorship for the vehicle had been considered, for example, from the dealership concerned. Ms Ellis indicated the Hyndburn had not previously tried that approach, but could bring back some information on this at the next meeting. Councillor Khan expressed some concerns around sponsorship which might attract some criticism around the dignity of the role of mayor.

**Agreed** - **To note the verbal report on the mayoral car quotes and the suggestion around possible sponsorship.**

## **8 Appointment of Mayor's Cadet**

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on the possible appointment of a Mayor's Cadet.

The Council had been approached in May 2022 by Flight Lieutenant Paul Morton, Officer Commanding, 1035 (Accrington & District) Squadron Air Training Corps, commonly referred to as the Air Cadets, about the possibility of establishing a Mayoral Cadet. Since then work had been on-going to develop a suitable scheme.

A number of local authorities were known to appoint a Mayor's Cadet as part of the civic arrangements for the local borough or town/parish council area. The role involved a representative of one of the three Cadet forces (army, sea and air) being appointed on an annual basis. Generally, their role would be to accompany the Mayor at selected civic events throughout the year to support the Mayor, to make speeches, as appropriate, to represent the uniformed Cadet services and to raise the profile of the military and its training arm within the wider community. The role would complement a similar position available in Lancashire for a Lord Lieutenant's Cadet.

A draft report for Cabinet was provided, together with a draft protocol and application/consents form, as Appendices to the covering report.

The views of the Sea and Army Cadets as to this proposal were not yet known. Subject to the Board's endorsement of this proposal, further work would be undertaken to consult all three services on the draft protocol and form, with a view to the report being submitted to Cabinet in September 2024.

The Board was invited to consider whether Officers should progress the proposals to establish a Mayoral Cadet with effect from 2025/26 and to undertake the necessary consultations.

Councillor Cassidy noted that Lord Lieutenant successfully operated a similar arrangement for a cadet. He also raised a question about the possible inclusion of Police and Fire Service cadets in the arrangements. Councillor Alexander enquired if it would be possible to appoint 2 Mayoral Cadets (one male and one female) in order for the post-holders to provide mutual support for each other at events.

**Agreed** - **To request Officers to progress the proposals to establish a Mayoral Cadet role with effect from**

**2025/26, including the possible inclusion of Police and Fire Service cadets and the annual appointment of both a male and female cadet, and to undertake the necessary consultations.**

## **9 Town Twinning**

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on a proposal to establish a Town Twinning relationship between Accrington and Khust in Ukraine.

The proposal to twin with Khust had initially been brought forward by one of the residents in Hyndburn on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, neurologist Dr Valeyrie Hrymchak. In August 2023, Hyndburn Council had hosted an initial virtual meeting between Chief Executive, David Welsby, the (former) Leader of the Council Marlene Haworth, the Mayor and Mayoress of Hyndburn, Council officers and representatives from Khust, including the Mayor of Khust. The following week, Hyndburn Council had hosted a civic reception at Haworth Art Gallery to welcome a number of representatives from Khust. A presentation in support of twinning was also provided at the Council meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

It was currently proposed that a delegation from the Ukraine would again visit the Borough and the cities of Preston and Lancaster between 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024. The Mayor of Hyndburn would be asked to host a suitable civic reception at the Haworth Art Gallery on Day 1 of the visit.

A copy of a draft report to Council in September 2024 was provided as an Appendix to the covering report. This document outlined the background as mentioned above and set out the potential benefits of twinning and a process to take this forward. The next step envisaged the establishment of a working group to include both officers and elected members, to further explore projects and initiatives that could align with the aims of the twinning proposal.

The Leader of the Council had recently indicated that he was happy for the Council to continue to pursue town twinning with Khust.

The Board was invited to reaffirm whether the Council should be invited to support a proposal to twin Accrington with Khust and, if so, to endorse the project aims as set out in the draft report and the intention to establish a working group to lead further development. Councillor Aziz commented that it was unfortunate that the presentation at the Council meeting last November had coincided with a protest in relation to hostilities in Palestine. Officers were asked to be mindful of other business on the Council agenda when this matter was due to be discussed again and, if necessary, to arrange a special meeting of Council with a single item agenda. Councillor Cassidy also approved progressing town twinning and agreed with the approach outlined above.

Councillor Aziz enquired when town twinning had last occurred in the Borough. Mr Joinson, Member Services Manager, commented that this had not occurred in recent years. Councillor Alexander indicated that nationally town twinning appeared to have tailed off. The Leader confirmed the controlling groups' commitment to town twinning and suggested that, if successful, other town twinning arrangements might be forged.

### **Agreed**

- **To reaffirm the commitment to twin Accrington with Khust and to endorse the project aims as set out in the draft report and the intention to establish a working group to lead further development**



## 10 Remembrance Parades

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on a proposal to make changes to the Remembrance Sunday parades for Church and Rishton for 2024.

Members were reminded of an initial discussion on the matter of remembrance parades at the Board meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023.

The Council proactively supported the arrangements for seven services across the Borough on Remembrance Sunday, organised by a mixture of RBL, councillors, churches and voluntary groups depending on the locality or township. Services took place in the following locations:

- Accrington;
- Huncoat;
- Church;
- Oswaldtwistle;
- Clayton-le-Moors;
- Rishton; and
- Great Harwood.

Each of these events included some form of parade for which the Council was wholly responsible. The RBL had in recent years issued strict instructions to their local branches that they must not themselves organise parades on the highway for insurance reasons. The Council's insurance did, however, cover it for parades, subject to appropriate risk assessments having been carried out. As part of the aforementioned guidance, the RBL had explained to their branches that they should respect the decision of local authorities regarding the viability of parades. The guidance was also clear that an act of remembrance did not need to include a parade. This position had also been acknowledged at an events planning meeting between regional RBL representatives and Council officers held in 2023.

In recent years the cost of parades had risen due to increasing costs of specialist traffic management and the need for improved marshalling to comply with control measures included in event risk assessments. The Police no longer undertook any traffic management duties. The costs in 2023 were approximately £1k for marshalling and £7k for traffic management. The total cost of funding Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day in 2023 was £13k, including musicians, wreaths and printing costs. The total Budget set aside for 2024 was £10,900. Accordingly, there was a need to consider some changes to keep within the overall Budget.

The traffic management costs by township in 2023 were as follows:

Accrington	Rolling Rd Block/ Half Closure	£975.00
Huncoat	HBC marshals only required on Burnley Lane	Nil
Church	Ln Closures & Stop+Go/ Rolling Road Block	£1,360.00
Oswaldtwistle	Rolling Rd Block/ Rd Closure & Diversion	£1,095.00
Clayton-le-Moors	Rolling Rd Block	£645.00
Rishton	Rolling Rd Block/ Stop+Go/ Rd closure kit	£815.00
Great Harwood	Rolling Rd Block/ Rd Closures	£975.00

In November 2023, the Board had agreed to request the Member Services Manager to review the parades to be arranged for 2024, in consultation with the service organisers, with a view to improving safety and managing costs.

Having regard to the above, the following observations were made:

- **Church** - The Church parade from Bank Street, via Henry Street, Dill Hall Lane, Buckingham Grove and Riding Barn Street, to Gatty Park (crossing Hyndburn Road/Dunkenhalgh Way) was the most expensive traffic management intervention and its cost was disproportionate to the number of people attending the parade. The closure of the Hyndburn Road/Dunkenhalgh Way junction was particularly disruptive to traffic flows given the route's status as the main artery from Church and Accrington to/from the M65.

Arrangements for the Church service were led by Church and Oswaldtwistle Branch of the RBL.

*Proposed Change:* It was recommended that this parade should no longer take place, with the participants instead gathering directly in Gatty Park for a memorial service. If this proposal was not supported, an alternative proposal could involve a shorter parade starting from the gardens at Manor Place at the bottom of Dill Hall Lane, but crucially above the Hyndburn Road/Dunkenhalgh Way road junction.

- **Rishton** - The Rishton parade from St Peter and St Paul's Church on Church Street, via Blackburn Road to the War Memorial on Churchill Avenue and return traditionally to Rishton Library was considerably disruptive to traffic. Stop/Go signs were in operation throughout the service to allow cars to use the Esplanade to avoid the closed section of Blackburn Road where the public gathered at the War Memorial. However, lorries and buses could not access this cut-through. Marshals regularly reported that the return parade was difficult to manage with key access points onto Blackburn Road not effectively closed to traffic. The return parade also delayed the end of the main road closure and was poorly supported, as people tended to disperse naturally after the service at the War Memorial had ended. A change of return route in 2023 to allow dispersal at the end of Station Road, close to the Rishton Arms, had added further complexity to crowd management, as the parade had split off from participants returning to the town centre.

Arrangements for the Rishton service were led by Councillor Kate Walsh and Father Eddie Carr (Vicar St Peter and St Pauls CE Church).

*Proposed Change:* It was recommended that the return parade did not take place to allow for a more natural dispersal of participants. This would allow the earlier reopening of Blackburn Road to all traffic. Marshals should remain in close contact with the crowd to ensure that pedestrians used the pavements to return to Rishton town centre and did not stray onto the highway. If this proposal was not supported, an alternative would be for the return parade to terminate at St Peter and St Paul's Church.

Early discussions would be required with the organisers of the services in Church and Rishton to consider the proposed changes. Prior to undertaking these consultations officers would find it helpful to gauge whether there was broad political support for the changes. It would also be important to inform the relevant ward councillors to ensure that they understood the reasons for the changes and were in a position to respond to any queries or criticism from local residents.

Any difficulties encountered during the consultation process would be reported back to the Board in late summer.

The Leader commented that residents were often attached to the tradition of holding a parade and it might not be easy to make the changes proposed. Councillor Cassidy considered that the decision might be easier to explain if the Council emphasised the safety and practical concerns around the parades, rather than the financial considerations. Members considered that consultations would need to take place with the RBL/relevant service organisers and local ward councillors.

**Agreed**

- (1) That approval be given, in principle, to the proposed changes to the Remembrance Sunday parades for Church and Rishton for 2024 and that officers be requested to undertake the necessary consultations.**
- (2) That a further report be provided to the next meeting of the Board.**

## **11 Process for Appointment of Independent Persons to Audit Committee**

Members considered a copy of a report and recommendations which had been considered by the Audit Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Paragraph 2.1(1) of the report, recommending Council to appoint 2 independent persons, had been agreed by the Committee. Paragraph 2.1(2), proposing a methodology and process for the appointments, had not been approved, but had been referred back for further consideration.

The Board was requested to endorse Recommendation (1) of the report and to consider and make comments as to the methodology for the selection of candidates, with a view to final recommendations being put to the Audit Committee in September, prior to a decision being taken by the Council.

Ms Ellis commented that CIPFA was promoting the appointment of independent members. Councillor Alexander clarified that the decision at Paragraph 2.1(2) had envisaged councillors going back to their political groups to discuss the proposals and, in particular the interview process. It was likely the Mark Beard, Head of Internal Audit, would be involved in the interview process with other suitable officers. Mr Joinson added that paragraph 3.10 of the report currently envisaged interviews being carried out by senior officers of the Council and the Chair of the Audit Committee. Ms Ellis added that 'neutral' officers could be identified for the interview process if Members wished to ensure an element of independence from the audit process.

Councillors spoke about the need to take sufficient time consider this matter to ensure that the right process was established.

**Agreed**

- To endorse Recommendation (1) of the report to appoint 2 independent persons to the Audit Committee and to support further discussions taking place within the political groups about the methodology for the selection of candidates.**

## **12 Process for Selecting Aldermen and Freeman**

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on the Process for Selecting Aldermen and Freeman.

At the Annual Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024, Councillors had discussed the possibility of clarifying the process for selecting freemen and aldermen, with particular reference to the nomination procedure. Councillor Dad had an undertaking to discuss this at the Leader's Policy Development Board.

The report included an extract from the Civic Protocol in the Constitution which outlined the selection criteria for both Honorary Freemen and Aldermen.

Members were reminded that a nomination for a freemen must be capable of securing a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members who vote on it at Council.

There were a number of costs associated with the appointment of aldermen and freemen, which related to the following items (2024 prices incl. VAT):

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost (£)</b>
Alderman/Freeman silver gilt badge and case	546
Certificate with frame and flowers or gift	40
Free meal at Mayor Making event	35
Up to 10 (free) family/friends meals	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>971</b>

The above expenditure was not specifically provided for within the Mayoralty budget, although in recent years officers had been able to contain the costs within the overall service budget. There was, however, significant financial pressure when multiple honours were bestowed in the same municipal year. The Protocol regarding freemen recommended that normally only one freeman should be appointed in any one year. Members were asked to consider whether to impose a limit on the overall number of honours awarded in any one year, including aldermen, other than in exceptional circumstances. If multiple awards were to be made, additional funding would need to be identified.

The Protocol included an outline of the role of this Board in the nomination process for both aldermen and freemen. In general, nominations for the honorary positions could come from anyone, including individual councillors, political groups, officers, partner organisations or a member of the public. In practice, nominations would usually require the support of at least one serving councillor to act as sponsor for the nomination.

A further consideration was the timing of the submission of nominations. In order to provide a degree of certainty for potential recipients of the award, it would be desirable for nominations to be put to Council by no later than the March meeting. This would ensure that any appointment was approved in good time, prior to the formal presentation at the Mayor Making meeting in June. This would also allow the recipient time to contact family members and friends who might wish to attend the presentation.

In addition, due to the high cost of aldermen/freemen badges, the Council did not generally keep these items in stock, which meant that they need to be ordered in accordance with demand. The specialist suppliers, Vaughtons, had a manufacturing time of 8-10 weeks following the placement of an order. Therefore, it would be helpful if the Board could sign off its recommendations to Council by no later than 1<sup>st</sup> March. This would also allow time to consider any additional funding requirements if multiple awards were being considered.

Ms Ellis added that historically the Board would sign off any awards before Christmas. This timing might also help to avoid any political controversy in the selection process. Amendments could be made to the Civic Protocol to tighten up the process. A maximum number of awards could be set, say no more than 4 in any one year.

Councillor Dad suggested that the number of guests at the Mayor Making meal per appointee could be reviewed. 10 seemed to be too generous. He also commented that the nomination of freemen was often close to the election as a means of rewarding active members of the community for their achievements. It might be appropriate to nominate 2 persons each year. Councillor Khan concurred that the number of free guests seemed excessive. Additional guests could be invited, but would need to be at the expense of the recipient of the honour. He observed that the appointment of freemen was not generally political and was based on their contribution to the Borough. He would be happy to work with the Leader of the Council to propose nominees. Councillor Cassidy supported the suggestion that the number of new aldermen should be capped each year.

Members enquired about when the Civic Protocol could be amended. Ms Ellis confirmed that this could occur at any time during the year but would need Council approval. A revised draft could be submitted to the next meeting of the Board. The Mayoral Cadet implications could also be included in any revision.

Councillor Aziz noted that the current year was Hyndburn Borough Council's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and that freemen could be selected with this landmark honour in mind.

**Agreed**

- (1) To note the report on the selection process for Freemen/Aldermen and the timeframe for final nominations to be approved by the Board for submission to Council.**
- (2) To approve a limit of 2 freemen and 2 aldermen appointments per year, other than in exceptional circumstances.**
- (3) To agree to nominations generally being submitted to the Board around Christmas.**
- (4) To request the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) to provide a revised Civic Protocol to the next meeting of the Board.**

**13 Councillors and Disability**

Councillors considered a report of the Member Services Manager on Councillors and Disability.

The Council was committed to understanding and supporting councillors who might have a disability to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. The authority had a statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments in respect of councillors with a disability, which might include adaptations to equipment, use of assistive technology, or amendments to its usual procedures, where practicable.

The welcome letter sent to new councillors, as part of the induction process, outlined this commitment to councillors and invited any members with a disability, who wished to do so, to discuss their needs in confidence with Member Services officers. In addition, so as to capture information from existing councillors, an e-mail had been sent to all councillors on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 repeating this message.

A single response had been received to the e-mail survey, as follows:

*“We need to look at microphones and speaker system for the Council Chamber. It’s a real problem for some of our councillors who are hard of hearing.*

*I know this has been previously raised and is this something we can look at. Also, the chairs in the QE Room are extremely uncomfortable for meetings and I doubt would pass a DSE assessment. How do we go about getting these replaced?”*

In addition to the above response, Member Services was aware of three councillors who required paper copies of agendas to be printed on coloured paper, to assist with cognitive disorders, such as dyslexia.

The disability survey would be repeated annually by Member Services and would include all councillors.

**Agreed**

**- To note the outcome of the disability needs survey and the Council’s on-going commitment to supporting councillors who might have a disability.**

**14 Other Business**

There were no other items of business raised.

**15 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed.

Signed:.....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
At which the minutes were confirmed