



Melksham Town Council

Awarding the Freedom of the Town Policy

Date Adopted: 20th October 2025

Date Due For Review: October 2027



AWARDING THE FREEDOM OF THE TOWN POLICY

1. Introduction

The origins of Freemen in England go back in history to the guilds of the medieval merchants and craftsmen whose influence helped to found and stabilise urban communities. Freemen enjoyed a special status in boroughs which usually included the right to trade and vote at elections for, and sitting on, the Borough Council. The power to vote at parliamentary elections was usually confined to Freemen - the right to become a Freeman being dependent upon birth, purchase or by apprenticeship to a master craftsman who was himself a Freeman. The Municipal Corporations Act 1835 removed these privileges.

The Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act 1885, (now replaced by the Local Government Act of 1972, section 249), permitted Councils to give the title of Honorary Freeman to 'persons of distinction and any persons who have rendered eminent services to the Borough'. This is the authority for the election of such Honorary Freemen today.

The title of Honorary Freeman is the highest honour that a Council can bestow although it carries no privileges and is purely an honour to recognise the significant and valuable services rendered to the Town by that person. However, those successful will be able to use the title of 'Freeman' and receive invitations to major civic events. Their name will also be displayed on a roll of honour in a prominent position in a civic building.

2. Procedure

2.1 A nomination can be made by a councillor or any resident of Melksham by sending notification to the Town Clerk. Nominations should be submitted via the online form but a printed form can be supplied if required

2.2 Councillors will be notified of the nomination and asked to advise if they are in agreement and if they will be attending the special meeting.

2.3 Nominee to be contacted to make sure they would accept the honour.

2.4 A special meeting of the full council will be arranged, far enough ahead for a scroll to be ordered.

2.5 Agenda will be advised in the normal way

2.6 The nominee will be invited to attend the meeting.

3. At the Meeting

3.1 The Chair of the Special Meeting will read out the motion and seek a proposer and seconder.

3.2 Members will vote and the motion will require a two-thirds majority of members present.

3.3 Once approved, the scroll will be signed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk and presented to the nominee.

3.4 Pictures can be taken following the presentation for publication on the Council's social media and, if appropriate, releasing to the press.

Application form can be obtained by following this link:-

<https://forms.office.com/e/EQWtq7j6uc>

or by scanning this QR code

Freedom of the Town Nomination Form

