



Committee	Full Council
Month	September 2026
Report Title	Freedom of Saffron Walden Policy
Report Author	Deputy Town Clerk
Attachments	None

Agenda item: 9f

Summary

Council is asked to consider the adoption of a new policy, providing Council with the ability to award Freedom of the Town to an individual.

The proposed draft policy is attached for information and consideration.

Should Council be minded to adopt the policy, a communications campaign will be launched inviting nominations.

It is anticipated Council would use this policy with discretion and that nominations/approvals would be maintained to a minimum to respect the high-regard of the Award.

Recommendations

To consider the adoption of the proposed Freedom of Saffron Walden Policy attached.



SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Freedom of the Town

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Date of Review
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1. **Purpose of Policy**

- 1.1. This policy sets out the framework by which Saffron Walden Town Council may consider and confer the honorary title of Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman of Saffron Walden on individuals who have rendered exceptional service to the town. The honour is symbolic and represents the highest civic recognition that the Council may bestow.

2. **Scope**

- 2.1. This policy applies to all nominations for the award of Freedom of the Town made to Saffron Walden Town Council. It covers eligibility, nomination, assessment, approval, conferral, entitlements, record keeping, review and revocation.

3. **Legislative and Historical Context**

- 3.1. Under Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by Section 29 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, Saffron Walden Town Council may admit persons of distinction, or persons who have in the Council's opinion rendered eminent service to the town, as Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewomen of Saffron Walden. The resolution must be passed at a meeting of the Council specially convened for that purpose, where notice of the object of the meeting has been given, and by not less than two-thirds of the members voting on it.

4. **Definitions**

- 4.1. **Honorary Freeman or Honorary Freewoman:** a title awarded to an individual who meets the criteria in this policy.
- 4.2. **The Town:** the civil parish and community of Saffron Walden.
- 4.3. **The Council:** Saffron Walden Town Council.

5. **Eligibility Criteria**

- 5.1. The nominee must have made an exceptional, sustained and demonstrable contribution to the life, wellbeing, reputation or development of Saffron Walden.
- 5.2. The contribution may be through civic, charitable, community, cultural, educational, environmental, sporting, public service, voluntary or other activities that have brought significant benefit to the town.
- 5.3. The honour should be reserved for distinction or eminent service and should not normally be awarded for short-term activity, routine employment, political service alone, or service given solely in pursuit of personal or commercial gain.
- 5.4. The maximum number of freemen or freewomen at any one time is not restricted, but awards are expected to remain rare and exceptional.
- 5.5. Nominees must be living residents.
- 5.6. Sitting councillors and current employees of the Council will not normally be eligible while in office or employment.

6. Nomination Process

- 6.1. Nominations may be submitted by a councillor, community organisation, local group, resident, or other person with a clear connection to Saffron Walden.
- 6.2. Nominations must be made in writing using the Council's nomination form.
- 6.3. The nomination should explain the nominee's connection with Saffron Walden, the nature and duration of their service, the impact of their contribution, and the reasons why the award would be appropriate.
- 6.4. Where possible, nominations should include supporting evidence, such as references, testimonials, press coverage, records of service or other relevant information.
- 6.5. Nominations should be submitted to the Town Clerk, who will acknowledge receipt and advise on the process and likely timetable.

7. Assessment Procedure

- 7.1. The Town Clerk will undertake an initial check to ensure the nomination is complete and within the scope of this policy.
- 7.2. Eligible nominations will be considered confidentially by Council, which may request further information before determination.
- 7.3. The assessment will consider whether the nominee's contribution is exceptional, sustained, directly connected to Saffron Walden, and of clear public benefit.
- 7.4. All personal information will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.

8. Decision by Council

- 8.1. The award may only be made by resolution of Saffron Walden Town Council at a meeting of the Full Council specially convened for that purpose, where notice of the object of the meeting has been given.
- 8.2. The resolution must be passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting on it.
- 8.3. The Council is not obliged to confer the honour in any year and may decline any nomination without giving detailed reasons.

9. Announcement and Conferral

- 9.1. Following approval, the Council will agree appropriate arrangements for announcing and conferring the honour. This may include presentation during a civic ceremony, special Council meeting, or other suitable public occasion. The recipient will normally receive a certificate or scroll and their name will be entered in the Council's official record of honorary freemen and honorary freewomen.

10. Entitlements and Privileges

- 10.1. The Freedom of the Town is an honorary title only. It does not confer legal rights, financial benefits, precedence, voting rights, access rights, or any entitlement to Council services or facilities, unless specifically agreed by the Council for a ceremonial occasion.
- 10.2. Any person declared an honorary freeman or freewoman of the Town may
- 10.3. designate him/herself “honorary freeman/freewoman of Saffron Walden”
- 10.4. Any honorary freeman or freewoman of the Town shall be invited to all subsequent civic events and functions.

11. Revocation

- 11.1. The Council may revoke the honorary title where, in its opinion, the recipient has acted in a way that brings the honour, the Council, or the town into disrepute, or where information comes to light that would have materially affected the original decision. Revocation must be considered by full Council and should follow a fair and proportionate process, including giving the recipient or their representative the opportunity to make written representations where appropriate.

12. Record Keeping and Publicity

- 12.1. The Council will maintain a record of all recipients.
- 12.2. Publicity will be handled sensitively and in accordance with the recipient’s wishes, where practicable, and with data protection requirements. The Council may publish the recipient’s name, citation and date of admission where appropriate.

13. Equality and Accessibility

- 13.1. The Council will apply this policy fairly, consistently and without discrimination. The nomination and conferral process should be accessible, and reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.

14. Review of Policy

- 14.1. This policy will be regularly reviewed and in accordance with legislation, guidance, Council practice or local circumstances.

Freedom of Saffron Walden Nomination Form

Details of Nominator

Full Name	
Full Address	
Email	
Telephone	
Date	
Signature	

Details of nominee

Full Name	
Full Address (must be in Saffron Walden)	

Details of nominee application questions

Are you related to the person you are nominating? Yes / No (please circle)

In what category are you nominating them? (i.e., charity, volunteer, former councillor or staff member, other, if so please state _____) (please circle)

How long have you approximately known the individual? _____

In what capacity are you nominating the individual? _____

Please explain why you are making your nomination in as much detail as possible (approx. 250 words).

Please return your completed nomination to Saffron Walden Town Council

Town Hall, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR
enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk 01799 516 504