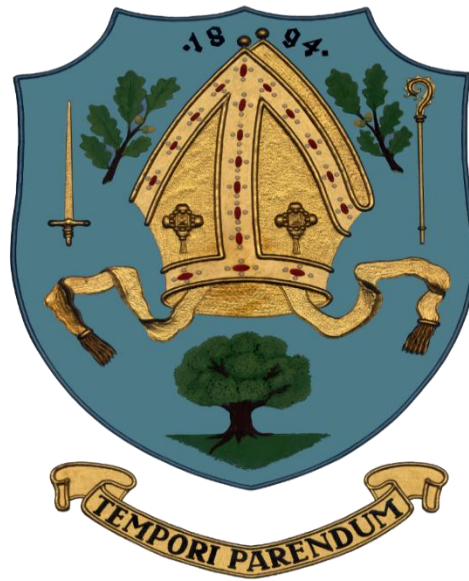


BISHOP AUCKLAND TOWN COUNCIL



Freedom of the Town Policy

Effective from: 25th Nov 2025

Last reviewed: Nov 2025

Next review:

Version Control: V1

Previous revision dates:

Review Panel Community Committee

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this document is available on the Council's Website www.bishopauckland-tc.gov.uk and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Town Council Office, 54 Kingsway, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7JF.

Costs are as per the publication scheme.

Contents

Contents 2

1. Introduction..... 3

2. Purpose of the Award 3

3. Nomination criteria 3

4. Nomination Process..... 3

5. Council Decision..... 4

6. Notification and Acceptance..... 4

7. Presentation and Ceremony..... 4

8. Post-Ceremony Actions 4

9. Record Keeping..... 4

1. Introduction

Bishop Auckland Town Council to recognise the efforts of members of the community who demonstrate outstanding commitment to the Town of Bishop Auckland, and who have in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services. The Council will do this, in special circumstances that meet the criteria of this policy, by awarding to an individual the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of Bishop Auckland.

The granting of the the title of Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of the town is a ceremonial and symbolic honour representing the highest distinction a Town can bestow upon an individual or group.

Since 2010, parish and town councils have held the power to confer the title of “Honorary Freeman” or “Honorary Freewoman” in accordance with Sections 249(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1972. This distinction may be awarded to “persons of distinction” or to those who, in the opinion of the Council, have rendered eminent services to the Council’s area.

Historically, the Freedom of the Town carried certain privileges, such as the right to enter the Town bearing arms or with a military escort. Today, it is a symbolic recognition and does not confer any legal rights or privileges. Instead, it serves as a mark of gratitude, trust, and respect between the Town and an individual or group who has made a significant contribution to the local community.

This honour will be awarded only on rare and exceptional occasions. A maximum of five persons, unless otherwise decided by the Council, may be awarded the title Honorary Freeman/Freewoman of Bishop Auckland in any one year.

2. Purpose of the Award

The Freedom of the Town acknowledges:

- Exceptional service or contribution to the life and wellbeing of the community;
- Acts that have brought distinction, pride, or positive recognition to the Town; or
- Long-standing dedication to public service or local civic life.

3. Nomination criteria

When assessing nominations, the Council shall take into account one or more of the following criteria:

- Community Service: Exceptional or long-term contribution to the local community or voluntary sector.
- Public Service: Outstanding dedication in public office, including service as a Town Councillor for a minimum of 12 years.
- Achievement: Significant accomplishment in sport, culture, the arts, science, or academia (e.g., representing the nation at the highest level, receiving international honours such as an Olympic title, Nobel Prize, or equivalent distinction).
- Civic Contribution: Distinguished service that has brought credit, recognition, or benefit to the Town and its residents
- Nominees need not necessarily be resident with the Bishop Auckland Town Council area.
- Any nominated Town Councillor should have retired from the post.

4. Nomination Process

Nominations may be submitted by any Town Councillor or by the Council itself.

Nominations should be made in the strictest confidence without the nominee's knowledge.

Any resident or elector of Bishop Auckland may make a nomination but it must be sponsored by a Town Councillor.

Nominations must be made in writing to the Town Clerk and supported by evidence of the voluntary service provided by the individual to the community and any other examples of service which justifies the honour.

. 5. The decisions of the Council on all nominations are final.

5. Council Decision

The Council shall consider nominations at an Ordinary Meeting, in closed session.

A resolution to confer the Freedom of the Town must be approved by no less than two thirds of the Councilor's present and voting.

6. Notification and Acceptance

Once approved, the Town Clerk shall inform the nominee of the Council's intention to bestow the honour and seek their formal acceptance.

Arrangements for a presentation ceremony and reception will be made upon acceptance

7. Presentation and Ceremony

A formal Freedom of the Town Reception shall be held at a suitable local venue, subject to budget and mutual agreement.

Under Section 249(9) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council may expend a reasonable sum on presenting an address to the Honorary Freeman or Freewoman.

During the ceremony:

- The Mayor and other Councillors may offer remarks or tributes.
- The Scroll of Admission shall be signed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk and presented to the recipient.
- The recipient may request that the Council arrange professional framing of the scroll on their behalf.

8. Post-Ceremony Actions

Following the ceremony:

- Official photographs will be taken and archived.
- A press release will be issued to local media, accompanied by a photograph.
- The Council's website and social media platforms will be updated to record and celebrate the conferral.

9. Record Keeping

A record of all individuals or groups granted the Freedom of the Town shall be maintained by the Town Clerk and preserved within the Council archives as a matter of historical and civic significance.