Strategy and Resources Committee
10 November 2026

CONFERRING THE TITLE OF HONORARY FREEWOMAN

Head of Service:	Piero Ionta, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
Report Author	Tim Richardson
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Supporting statement for Barbara Warwick Appendix 2 – Supporting statement for Judy Sarssam

Summary

The report invites the Committee to recommend conferring the title of Honorary Freewoman on:

1. Barbara Warwick
2. Judy Sarssam

in recognition of their eminent services to the Borough.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

(1) Recommend that the Council places on record its deep appreciation of the eminent services to the Borough of Epsom and Ewell rendered by:

a. Barbara Warwick

b. Judy Sarssam

(2) That a Special Meeting of the Council be convened immediately following Full Council on 8 December 2026, at which members will be recommended to confer the title of Honorary Freewoman.

1 Reason for Recommendation

1.1 This report invites the Committee to consider conferring the title of Honorary Freewoman on:

a. Barbara Warwick

b. Judy Sarssam

1.2 It is customary for the Council to consider the possibility of the award of honours to persons who have given eminent services to the Borough.

1.3 A nomination for the aforementioned persons has been received by the Council's Chief Executive.

1.4 Supporting statements for both Barbara Warwick (Appendix 1) and Judy Sarssam (Appendix 2) are attached to this report.

2 Background

2.1 Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows Local Authorities to appoint both Honorary Freemen/Freewomen and Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen. The criterion for appointment as Freeman or Freewoman is that an individual should be a "person of distinction" and have "rendered eminent service to the place or area". The criterion for appointment as an Alderman or Alderwoman is that an individual "should have rendered eminent service to the Council as [a] past Member of that Council". There is no bar on an individual being both an Honorary Freeman and an Honorary Alderman.

2.2 The Local Government Act specifies that both Honorary Freemen/Freewomen and Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen must be appointed at a Special Meeting of Council specifically convened for that purpose (so no other business can be transacted at such a meeting, with the appointment being endorsed by a two thirds majority of those Members in attendance at the meeting.

2.3 Honorary Aldermen/Alderwomen have no 'legal or social precedence' but it is custom and practice that they are invited to all Civic ceremonial events. The Aldermen/Alderwomen have no right to attend meetings of the Council or its committees beyond those of the public, but the Council has recognised their attendance and allowing then to sit within the Chamber. The Aldermen/Alderwomen status does not carry with it any allowances or payments to which serving councillors are entitled.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 Not applicable

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 Not applicable

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 Not applicable

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 Not applicable

3.5 Other

3.5.1 Not applicable

4 Financial Implications

4.1 Section 249(4A) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that principal councils:

4.2 '. . . may spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address, or a casket containing an address, to a person upon whom it has conferred the title of honorary alderman or honorary alderwoman.'

4.3 There are costs of preparing the traditional scrolls and a photographer for the ceremony. It is also customary for the Council to cover the cost of any hospitality provided for the newly elected Freewomen and a select number of guests. Hospitality will be held on a date to be confirmed in March 2027 at a Civic event held at Bourne Hall.

4.4 It is estimated that these costs will amount to £3,300 in total and will be met from existing budgets.

4.5 **Section 24** The estimated expenditure is below the applicable Section 24 consent threshold and will be met from existing approved budgets. No specific consent is therefore required.

4.6 **Section 151 Officer's comments**: The estimated costs of conferring the titles, including the preparation of the ceremonial scrolls, photography and associated hospitality, will be met from existing approved budgets.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 The formal decision to confer the status of Honorary Freewoman must be ratified by a Special Meeting of the Council.

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments**:

5.3 Under regulation 32(2) and 32(4) of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008, on vesting day any honorary aldermen/alderwomen or honorary freeman/freewoman of this Council ("a predecessor council") become honorary aldermen/alderwomen or are admitted as an honorary freeman/freewoman of East Surrey Council.

Policies, Plans & Partnerships

5.4 **Council's Key Priorities**: This proposal does not engage any of the Council's Key Priorities.

5.5 **Service Plans**: The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

5.6 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations** Not applicable.

5.7 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications**: Not applicable.

5.8 **Partnerships**: Not applicable.

5.9 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications**: None.

6 Background papers

6.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None

Other papers:

- None