

Cabinet

8 July 2025

Street Naming and Numbering Exemption

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alex Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement

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Summary

This report asks Cabinet to determine if it should exempt the 20-year restriction on using the name of a recently deceased individual in street naming, specifically to allow the naming of a new street at the former Lennox Wood site, Petham Green, after Alderman Paul Harriott. Consideration of the exemption is requested based on an application made by the Twydall ward Councillors and on the basis of Alderman Harriott's exceptional 52-year record of public service to Medway. Officers have confirmed family consent and found no evidence in the public record that would make the name unsuitable.

The exemption process, as outlined in the Council's Street Naming and Numbering policy allows for such consideration in exceptional cases one year after a person's death. The proposed naming affects a small side street of five properties, limiting potential future reputational and financial risks should a renaming exercise be required. These risks are further mitigated by research of public records and the decision being made publicly by the Cabinet.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. Cabinet is asked to determine if the request to exempt the restriction on the use of a recently deceased person's name should be approved with respect to Alderman Paul Harriott.
- 1.2. If the exemption is approved, Cabinet is requested to agree that Alderman Harriott's name can be used to name a street as part of the development at the former Lennox Wood site, Petham Green.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 2.1. Cabinet is the decision maker for the use of names of recently deceased persons within the naming and numbering of streets and properties in Medway.

- 2.2. A decision to exempt the Street Naming and Numbering (SNN) policy only applies where there has been less than 20 years since a person's death and there is evidence of that person having given or been recognised for outstanding service to Medway and its communities.
- 2.3. Officers have researched the public record for Alderman Paul Harriott in doing so have found evidence of an exceptional contribution to Medway and have not found evidence that would suggest their name is unsuitable for use as a street name.
- 2.4. Officers have been provided with evidence that family consent has been given.

3. Budget and policy framework

- 3.1. Street naming and numbering functions are statutory duties of the Council, and the SNN policy provides the framework for their effective and consistent delivery.
- 3.2. This Cabinet report is within the Council's policy and budget framework.

4. Background

- 4.1. The SNN policy, agreed at Cabinet on 30 July 2024, provides the locally agreed naming guidelines and conventions, which are essential for the creation of unique and unambiguous addresses for every property in the authority.
- 4.2. The policy states that names of a living person or someone recently deceased are not permitted to be used as a street name. To ensure this the Council applies a period of 20-years before considering an individual's name, this is to allow sufficient passage of time to assess that individual's local, historic or heritage significance.
- 4.3. In exceptional circumstances, where an individual has given or been recognised for outstanding service to Medway and its communities, an exemption process can be initiated 1 year after that individual's death, in relation to a specific site or development. This would allow consideration for the naming of a street to ensure the honourable perpetuation of their memory within the community.
- 4.4. The exemptions process requires an application to be made that must include consent, where possible, from direct living relatives or descendants of the deceased and explain the reason why this person can be considered to have given or been recognised for outstanding service to Medway and its communities, and why a street name or building name is more appropriate than another form of memorial.
- 4.5. Council officers would then conduct research into the deceased person to collate evidence as to the exceptional nature of the outstanding service to Medway and its communities and identify any information in the public record

that could suggest a name is unsuitable for use. This process also includes consultation with the relevant ward members and the Portfolio Holder will be consulted about the proposal.

- 4.6. An application for an exemption was made by the ward councillors for Twydall, Councillors Browne and Prenter, in respect of Alderman Paul Harriott who died on 2 May 2024. The application is for use of the name as part of the development at the former Lennox Wood site, Petham Green.

5. Options

- 5.1. Option 1: approve the exemption of the 20-year reflection period within the SNN policy with regard to Alderman Paul Harriott. The naming of a street would provide a lasting memorial recognising 52 years of public service, at a site of a new Council housing development. There is a risk that in exempting the policy the Council faces increased financial and reputational risk if evidence of inappropriate behaviour comes to light in the future.
- 5.2. Option 2: reject the exemption of the 20-year reflection period within the SNN policy with regard to Alderman Paul Harriott. This would allow for the normal processes set out within the SNN policy to take place and the name to be available for use, if appropriate, from 2044. Reducing the risk to the Council and allowing the eventual recognition of Alderman Harriott. The delay through this approach could limit the honourable perpetuation of their memory within the community.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. The Council's SNN policy provides a mechanism to allow an exemption in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.2. Officers in Data and Design and Medway Archives Service have conducted research into Alderman Harriott's public service, this research, in Appendix 1, is summarised below.
- 6.3. Alderman Paul Harriott, who served as a Labour councillor for Twydall from 1962 through to 2015, made significant contributions to the community throughout his career. He held various leadership roles, including Vice-Chairman of Gillingham Labour Party, Chairman of the Labour Club, and Mayor of Gillingham. He was also the Labour group leader of Gillingham Council in the 1980s and served as Junior and Senior Warden of the Rochester Bridge Wardens Trust.
- 6.4. Alderman Harriott was actively involved in several committees, such as the Housing Sub-Committee, Licensing and Safety Committee, and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He was dedicated to improving housing conditions, campaigning for green spaces, and ensuring resident safety. His efforts led to the modernisation of council houses, the establishment of a child welfare centre in Twydall and the implementation of safety measures in the community.

- 6.5. Alderman Harriott's commitment to the community extended beyond his role as a councillor. He was a governor at Danecourt School and St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School, and he helped found the Nye Bevan Memorial Hall in Twydall. He was also an active member of the Korean Veteran's Association and advised the Rochester Bridge Trust on the Rochester Bridge Refurbishment Project. In recognition of his service, the Rochester Bridge Trust established the Harriott Engineering Scholarship to support local people at the start of their engineering education.
- 6.6. The evidence gathered shows an exceptional contribution to Medway and its communities over 52 years of public service.
- 6.7. As part of that research there was no evidence in the public record that would suggest Alderman Harriott's name is unsuitable to be exempted from the 20-year reflection period and used as a street name.
- 6.8. The development at the former Lennox Wood site, Petham Green comprises of 19 new council properties. There is a small side street that will be created as part of the development with 5 of the 19 properties located on it. It is this section that is proposed to be named after Alderman Harriott.
- 6.9. The development provides a link geographically to the ward Alderman Harriott previously represented and aligns with his support for public housing whilst in his role as a councillor.
- 6.10. The relatively small number of properties affected limits the risk to the Council should a renaming exercise be required at a subsequent date.
- 6.11. If the exemption is approved, the street name structure, the prefix and suffix used, and decisions about the numbering of properties to the street will not form part of this decision and will be subject to the standard officer led processes.

7. Risk management

- 7.1. The inclusion of a 20-year reflection period within the SNN policy is designed to allow a natural period from a person's death for their local, historic or heritage significance to be determined and for information to become available that could indicate that an individual's name is unsuitable for use.
- 7.2. Applying this approach when naming streets reduces the risk to the Council and reduces the likelihood of a renaming exercise affecting residents living on those streets.
- 7.3. Whilst the policy does allow for an exemption of the 20-year reflection period, its use could mean an increased risk that information will become available that makes a name unsuitable for use.
- 7.4. As a result, there are potential financial impacts from a renaming exercise and reputational impacts from the use of the exemption.

- 7.5. In situations where an exempted name becomes unsuitable, there may be a need for the street to be renamed, affecting the residents of the properties named or numbered to it.
- 7.6. The exact financial costs are difficult to determine as they will be affected by the individual circumstances of the residents living there. Any costs would be associated with the consultation of affected residents and any administrative or legal charges associated with the change.
- 7.7. Reputationally, the Council's judicious decision-making processes may be publicly called into question.
- 7.8. To mitigate these risks, the decision-making process to apply an exemption is being made publicly by Cabinet members and not officers.
- 7.9. To further mitigate the risk that decision must be informed by research to determine if there are exceptional circumstances and any current information that could suggest a name is unsuitable.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Street renaming required	Information comes to light at a future point which calls into question the suitability of the street name, causing a renaming exercise. Creating financial and reputational impacts.	<p>Research of information already in the public domain to reduce the risk.</p> <p>Application of the SNN policy exemption in exceptional circumstances only.</p> <p>Cabinet decision made in public to allow transparency and accountability.</p>	CIII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

8. Consultation

- 8.1. The SNN policy requires consultation with the ward members for the location of the development and the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- 8.2. There is no pre-determined format for the consultation, the findings of the research conducted, and the potential risks were shared as part of the process.
- 8.3. The requirement for ward councillor consultation was designed to ensure local councillor representation if the application came from another source. The circumstances here are unusual as the ward councillors also made the application for the exemption.
- 8.4. As the Councillors have engaged with officers before the application was made and whilst making the application, the information and views shared during these interactions was used as the basis of the consultation.
- 8.5. Councillors Browne and Prenter provided the following response.

“Paul was an exemplar of what it means to be a public servant. He was selfless, open, and honest, and embodied leadership through integrity, objectivity, and accountability. However, his greatest attribute was that he cared, whether it was for Medway residents, those living in Twydall, new councillors, or anyone in need, he was there for them. Paul was modest and he would have viewed his public life as just doing what was right, however, he made an exceptional impact on Medway and its residents. This was recognised formally during his life when he was made an Alderman in 2015. The naming of a street in his honour after his death, in a community he cared for and linked to new public housing, seems a fitting way to recognise his contribution to Medway and ensure future generations remember him and the principles he embodied.”

- 8.6. Discussions have taken place with Councillor Paterson, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Highways and Enforcement, who gave his support for the proposal.

9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. There are no climate change implications associated with this report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. There are no immediate financial implications related to this decision.
- 10.2. If the name was subsequently found to be unsuitable, and a renaming process is required, it is estimated that there could be costs of between £5,000 and £10,000. Figures are based on costs to consult and administrative or legal charges associated with the change. These costs are not associated with any budget, creating a one-off pressure on the Council's budget.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1. The Council conducts its street naming and numbering function within relevant legislation, namely the County of Kent Act 1981, the Local Government Act 1972, the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847 and the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 11.2. These pieces of legislation provide the Council with discretion to choose appropriate street names, however, does not define this beyond names that are duplicated, confusing, or offensive.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Research for Alderman Paul Harriott

Background papers

[Street Naming and Numbering Policy](#)

[Cabinet Record of Decisions - Tuesday, 30 July 2024](#)