

Committee(s) General Purposes Committee of Aldermen Court of Aldermen	Date(s): TBC 12 May 2020
Subject: Report of Action Taken: Waiver for Livery Companies and Guilds	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Information
Report author: Lorraine Brook, Town Clerk's Department	

Summary

This report advises Members of action taken by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Chairman of the Court of Aldermen, in accordance with Standing Order No. 36 (Court of Aldermen).

Recommendation: That Members note the report.

Main Report

Urgent Decision – Waiver for Liveries and Guilds during COVID-19

Background

- (i) In light of the situation arising from COVID-19, and in an effort to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, the Government has issued guidance in respect of social distancing, attendance at social gatherings and general advice for persons, as far as possible, to remain at home and avoid any face-to-face interactions with any persons outside of the family home.
- (ii) Ordinarily, the general expectation of the Court of Aldermen, as outlined in the guidance issued on the formation of new guilds or companies, would be that all Guild or Company business should be conducted within the City boundaries. However, given the Government's advice on social distancing, a number of Livery Company and Guild clerks have sought guidance from the Clerk of the Chamberlain's Court about how to conduct Company business, including court meetings and the binding of apprentices, in the present extraordinary circumstances. Specifically, guidance was sought as to whether business conducted virtually would be considered valid.
- (iii) In response, the City Remembrancer researched the Court of Aldermen's powers in respect of being able to issue such a waiver and the assessment confirmed that the Court of Aldermen could allow Livery Companies and

Guilds to proceed in a different manner on a temporary basis, until such time that the COVID-19 crisis is over.

Reason for Urgency

- (iv) In light of the situation arising from COVID-19 the special meetings of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen, which were scheduled to take place on 2 April 2020, were cancelled. Therefore, in response to the large number of queries that were received about the possibility of a waiver being introduced by the Court of Aldermen to allow Livery Companies and Guilds to continue with their day-to-day operation in other ways (i.e. virtually or on a postponed basis for ceremonies) until such time that the COVID-19 crisis was over, the matter was formally considered in accordance with Standing Order No.36 on 5 April 2020.
- (v) The formal approval process followed an informal discussion by the Court of Aldermen at a virtual (informal meeting) on 2 April 2020, at which there was unanimous support for the introduction of the waiver.

Action Taken

- (vi) On 5 April 2020, following consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Chairman of the Court of Aldermen, the Town Clerk approved the introduction of a waiver in respect of the conduct of Livery Company and Guild practices (which would usually take place within City boundaries) and instructed that the following guidance be made available to Livery Companies and Guilds.

Guidance to Livery Companies and Guilds in light of COVID-19

In light of the current unprecedented situation in relation to COVID-19, the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen have agreed new guidance to Livery Companies and Guilds. The guidance has received input from The City Remembrancer and has been agreed by the Town Clerk under established urgency procedures.

The Court of Aldermen, being mindful that that the current unprecedented situation imposes restrictions upon the decision-making processes of a number of Companies (With or Without Livery) and Guilds, has agreed, as of 5 April 2020, to allow reasonable variation to the provisions contained in the Ordinances or By-Laws of such Companies or Guilds. The variation will be determined by the Company or Guild concerned and valid only during the period of restrictions on meetings in person applied by the Government.

The clerks of guilds and livery companies who enquire about the conduct of their business during the current extraordinary circumstances are advised:

- That, insofar as the Ordinances or By-Laws of any Company with Livery, Company without Livery or Guild contain restrictive or prescriptive provisions as to the location and timing of any meeting, election, installation or admission of any members or officers, the Court of Aldermen agrees to allow any reasonable variation to such provisions, to be determined by the guild or company concerned and to be valid only during the period of restrictions on meetings in person applied by the Government;
- That, owing to these restrictions, arrangements for business to take place virtually will, in consequence, be permissible; and
- That, in particular, procedures adopted on the occasion of the binding of apprentices may be conducted virtually, subject to the requirement for the indentures to be entered as soon as is reasonable practicable (and within 1 year) in the Books of the Chamberlain of London.

Conclusion

- (vii) Members of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen are asked to note the action taken in respect of the introduction of a waiver for Livery Companies and Guilds during the COVID-19 outbreak.

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