

ALDERMANIC ELIGIBILITY WORKING PARTY

Monday, 11 February 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Aldermanic Eligibility Working Party held at the Guildhall EC2 at 11.00am

Present

Members:

Mark Boleat (Chairman)	Deputy Bill Fraser
Deputy Ken Ayers (Chief Commoner)	Alderman Sir David Howard
Deputy Douglas Barrow	Alderman Ian Luder
Alderman Sir Robert Finch	Julian Malins

Officers:

John Barradell	- Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Paul Double	- City Remembrancer
Simon Murrells	- Assistant Town Clerk
Angela Roach	- Town Clerk's Office

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Simon Duckworth, Stuart Fraser and Alderman David Graves.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2012 were approved.

4. **ALDERMANIC ELIGIBILITY**

The Working Party considered a joint report of the Town Clerk, Comptroller and City Solicitor and the Remembrancer setting out the outcome of investigations into alternative options for the introduction of objective and defensible qualifications for becoming an Alderman.

Members accepted that maintaining the magistracy as a pre-election qualification would not remedy the current problems being experienced with the process. They also acknowledged that candidates needed to be better prepared for their journey through the process.

Detailed discussion ensued on the issue of probity and the merits of establishing a test to determine whether prospective candidates were “able and sufficient”. Members also discussed and dismissed the option of introducing an external screening process.

During further discussion the following comments were made:-

- Members noted that having a good pool of candidates was an administrative issue and not a legal requirement;
- Reference was made to the number of candidates who had been unsuccessful in applying to become a magistrate recently and as a consequence support was expressed for the production of appropriate guidelines for candidates in order to enhance the chances of success;
- It was agreed that Aldermen, Members and the Livery should play a more proactive role in identifying potential candidates and encouraging people to stand for the office;
- Whilst some Members questioned the longevity of PCCs, support was expressed for the introduction of criteria based on the qualifications for candidates standing for elections as PCCs as it was felt that the criteria could be defended if challenged;
- Members rehearsed a number of arguments for and against the retention of the magistracy and concluded that the magistracy was valuable and that it should therefore be retained as part of a twin-track approach. This would give candidates for the office of Alderman a choice of which route to take when standing for election i.e. either by being qualified as a magistrate or by satisfying a new and objective set of criteria; and
- An Alderman suggested that the alternative criteria adopted should include the disqualification where candidates are not able to stand if they have been disqualified under the Representations of the People Act 1983 (which covered corruption or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).

RESOLVED – That the content of the report be noted and that the following be recommended to the Grand Committees:-

1. the current pre-election qualification for Aldermanic candidates relating to the magistracy be retained and that approval be given to the introduction of alternative pre-election conditions similar to those imposed on candidates standing for election as PCCs which would give candidates for the office of Alderman a choice of which route to take when standing for election i.e. either by being qualified as a magistrate or by satisfying a new and objective set of criterion;

2. approval be given to the preparation of a Bill for an Act of Common Council and, subject to the Bill being settled by the Recorder of London, to it being submitted to the Court of Common Council for approval;
3. proposals for helping candidates to be better prepared for the application process to become a magistrate be endorsed and the production of guidance for candidates be supported (subject to it being seen by the Bench Chairman/Advisory Committee); and
4. given the importance of ascertaining whether individuals were suitable for the position of Alderman or Lord Mayor, in terms of their experience and understanding of the role, the view that Members and the Livery should play an informal role in identifying and encouraging individuals to stand for election as Aldermen be endorsed, with the job specification being reviewed and made publicly available.

5. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE WORKING PARTY

There were no questions relating to the work of the Working Party.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were no items of urgent business for consideration.

The meeting closed at 11.55am

Chairman

Contact Officer: Angela Roach
tel. no.: 020 7332 3685
angela.roach@cityoflondon.gov.uk