

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
General Purposes Committee of Aldermen – For Decision Standards Committee- For endorsement	10 <sup>th</sup> February 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Report on the Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality in relation to the Special Provision made for the Lord Mayor as a Ceremonial Office Holder	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> The Private Secretary & Chief of Staff	

### **Summary**

This report details the ‘special provision’ which will be applied to the declarations of gifts and hospitality for the Lord Mayor as a ceremonial office holder. The recommended approach aims to satisfy the requirements of the greater transparency agenda whilst acknowledging the diplomatic, political and commercial sensitivities which the Lord Mayor would encounter as part of his or her Mayoralty.

Proposals for both the declaration of gifts and for hospitality are detailed separately within the report.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to endorse the proposal to be forwarded to the Standards Committee.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. As a result of the Standards Committee meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014, attended by the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and the Private Secretary, this paper details the options for the declaration of gifts and hospitality, received by the Lord Mayor of the day, broadly in accordance with the conclusions of that Committee.
2. The members of the Standards Committee felt that the interests of transparency would be best served by reports of the Lord Mayor’s receipt of gifts and hospitality being publicly registered.

#### **Current Position**

#### **Gifts**

#### **Background**

3. At the Standards Committee meeting, the Chairman stressed that the different roles and different funding arrangements had to be taken into account in relation to the declaration of gifts received by the Lord Mayor. Alderman Sir David Wootton explained that gifts received by the Lord Mayor were largely gifts of diplomatic, political or commercial courtesy; the protocol for giving and receiving such gifts was clear about what was appropriate and could not therefore be avoided. The current process of logging and retention was also detailed to the Committee. Sir David explained that to adopt precisely the same approach as individual member declarations could cause diplomatic problems if a valuation was attributed to an item, and especially if it was inadvertently undervalued and if that were publicly stated. Similar problems arise if it was publicly stated whether or not a gift had been retained by the Lord Mayor.

## **Proposal**

4. The Chairman suggested that the best option would be to disclose all received gifts but not to indicate on the register whether they had been retained, thus ensuring transparency but also affording some protection diplomatically. Detail of whether the items had been retained by the Lord Mayor or sent to the London Metropolitan Archives would, however, be recorded by Mansion House as now and made available to the Chairman of the Standards Committee on request as a non-public paper. A link from the incumbent's webpage – where his or her individual register was published – could take the user to 'The Lord Mayor's register' to ensure that all Members were treated in the same manner. Likewise, a similar arrangement could be introduced for other ceremonial office holders such as the Sheriffs and the Chief Commoner.
5. The proposal would mean:
  - All gifts received by the Lord Mayor would be declared, regardless of whether they were under the £100 value – to avoid a potential form of offence and wasted time in valuing items to see if they should be listed.
  - No value will be attributed to the declared gift nor would it be stated whether it had been retained or passed to the LMA.
  - Only a very brief description of the gift would be given but the donor would be named.
  - This information would be made available to the public on the Members' declarations page on the CoLC website.
6. It is the responsibility of the Lord Mayor of the day to ensure that all gifts received are declared to officers and that the list is comprehensive. It is recommended that this approach should apply to the Lady Mayoress and, subject to further consultation, to the Sheriffs and other ceremonial offices.

## **Hospitality**

### **Background**

7. Under the terms agreed by the Court of Common Council, 'special provision' would be given to the ceremonial office holders, such as the Lord Mayor. On this basis, when appearing before the Committee the Private Secretary suggested that a quarterly list could be produced on a retrospective basis, identifying simply the total number of events attended but reporting, by exception, where hospitality had been provided by an organisation /individual on multiple occasions. However, the Committee strongly believed that fuller disclosure was required, with exception being made for events which might have a diplomatically, politically or commercially sensitive aspect.

### **Proposal**

8. It should be noted, that under the proposed new guidance Members are expected to declare hospitality of a value of £100 or more and/or instances of hospitality with a cumulative value of £200 or more when received from a single donor within a rolling twelve month period. In view of this, it is proposed that the same requirements and thresholds would apply to the office of Lord Mayor in declaring hospitality. Again, it was acknowledged by the Standards Committee that there may be instances where it would be diplomatically, politically or commercially inappropriate to declare hospitality, and as such it should not be reported publicly but this would be expected to happen rarely. Such hospitality would, however, be recorded by Mansion House and made available to the Chairman of the Standards Committee, on request, as a non-public paper.
9. Overseas hospitality which pertains to a commercially sensitive or to a diplomatic, political or commercial nature would not necessarily need to be declared in full but a brief summary of the events programme would be made available as an Annex to the submission – via a web-link to the usual Court of Common Council papers.
10. The list of hospitality received would be presented on a quarterly basis and would fall outside the individual declarations required to be made within 28 days.
11. It is recommended that this approach should apply to the Lady Mayoress and, subject to further consultation, to the Sheriffs and other ceremonial offices.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

12. It is hoped that such an approach would meet the objectives of the Standards Committee in seeking greater transparency, whilst also acknowledging the diplomatic, political and commercial sensitivities which the Lord Mayor would

encounter in his or her capacity as ambassador for UK financial and professional services.

### **Other Implications**

13. The new requirements will have an implication for person hours and resources at Mansion House. The Lord Mayor would also be required to allocate time to reviewing the lists, with the assistance of officers, prior to publication.
14. There is the potential for greater media scrutiny which may naturally result from publication of such lists.

### **Conclusion**

15. The proposals detailed above aim to assist in the improvement in transparency which the Standards Committee is seeking across the City of London Corporation, whilst acknowledging the diplomatic, political and commercial sensitivities which any Lord Mayor encounters. The solution offered forms a 'special provision' conferred by the Court of Common Council but also enables the members of the Standards Committee to have access to the fuller details of all the declarations.

### **Appendices**

16. Appendix 1 – Resolution of the Standards Committee to the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen (28/11/14).

### **Background Papers**

17. Standards Committee Minutes (28/11/14).

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