

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Policy and Resources Committee	19 October 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Election of Chief Commoner	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The annual election of a Chief Commoner is conducted in accordance with Standing Order No. 18, as agreed following the 2011 Governance Review Process and as amended following the Post Implementation review in 2012. While the election process has worked well to date, Members have identified a number of potential opportunities to enhance and further refine the parts of the process relating to the nomination of candidates for election. This report sets out the various proposed improvements and proposes their implementation effective for the 2017/18 election, including:

- amendments to the campaigning period, such as the introduction of an official “campaign period”; and
- amendments to the nominations process, such as the introduction of an upper limit to the number of nominations one candidate can receive.

#### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to consider the current arrangements for the election of Chief Commoner (as set out in the report), determining where any amendments to the process would be desirable in view of the issues raised by Members.

### Main Report

#### **Background**

1. As part of the City of London Corporation’s Governance Review process conducted in 2011, new arrangements were established to govern the election of a Chief Commoner. These arrangements were reviewed as part of the Post-Implementation study in 2012, with further amendments made in response to Members’ comments.
2. Although the system implemented has worked well to date, a number of opportunities to refine the process have been identified by Members. These refinements specifically relate to the nominations process leading up to the October Court meeting.
3. With it being three years since the Post-Implementation review, it is now timely to look once again at the arrangements with a view to identifying any further potential improvements or points of clarification.

### **Current Position**

4. The election process for the Chief Commoner is set out in Standing Order No. 18 as follows:

#### **18. Chief Commoner**

- (1). *The holder of the Office of Chief Commoner shall be a Member of the Court of Common Council.*
- (2). *The Chief Commoner shall be elected by the Court of Common Council at the October meeting each year.*
- (3). *The term of office of the Chief Commoner shall be for a period commencing and ending on the date of the first Court of Common Council after the wardmotes each year.*
- (4). *A Member is ineligible to seek election as Chief Commoner if he has previously served the Office of Chief Commoner.*
- (5). *Candidates for election to the Office of Chief Commoner shall be nominated by at least 10 other Members, nominations to be submitted to the Town Clerk by no later than nine working days before the meeting of the Court for inclusion in the Summons.*
- (6). *The Chief Commoner shall be:*
  - a. *an ex-officio Member of the Policy & Resources Committee;*
  - b. *Chairman of all Sub-Committees and Working Parties of the Policy & Resources Committee that are responsible for:-*
    - *the provision of City Corporation Hospitality*
    - *Members' privileges*
    - *Members' facilities (other than Guildhall Club)*
    - *Members' training and development;*
  - c. *ineligible to chair any City Corporation Committee other than the Sub-Committees and Working Parties referred to in Standing Order Number 18 (6) (b).*

### **Issues**

#### Canvassing Period

4. Several Members have expressed the view that the nominations process set out at subsection (5) is insufficiently clear, noting that there are no regulations (either formal or informal) in place around the period during which prospective candidates should canvass for support.
5. Over the years, some Members have started seeking support for their candidature many months in advance of the October election; others have waited until closer to the date. The Town Clerk currently sends a reminder of the process following the summer recess of each year; this email however does

not mark an official “start date” for campaigning and no prohibitions on earlier canvassing exist.

6. Concern has been expressed that this might disadvantage those Members who decide not to begin canvassing for support as early as other prospective competitors. Those who are not clear about standing at an earlier time might be dissuaded from standing, fearing that competitors had already attained a significant advantage.
7. Accordingly, the suggestion has been made that Members might wish to agree the implementation of a time limit for this canvassing period, perhaps to coincide with the email from the Town Clerk, which might mark the official beginning of the period.
8. Your Committee is therefore invited to consider whether the introduction of a time-limited campaigning period would be desirable. If so, Members’ views as to the appropriate timeframe are also sought.

#### *Nominations Required*

9. The number of nominations required for a valid candidature has also been the subject of debate.
10. Whilst a minimum of ten nominations from fellow Members is required, there is currently no upper limit to the number of nominations a Member can receive. Accordingly, some Members are able to successfully canvas and obtain the support of a large proportion of the Court well in advance of the deadline.
11. There is some concern that this might limit the ability of other Members to stand, thereby restricting the democratic choice of the Court and meaning the pool of candidates presented to the Court of Common Council to be balloted upon is unduly restricted.
12. Consequently, consideration could be given to the introduction of an upper limit on the number of nominations a Member could receive. In practice, this would mean that once a Member had received their ten nominations, their candidature would be confirmed and no further additions to the list of nominators would be accepted.
13. This would not of course prohibit those validly nominated candidates from continuing to canvas support for their bid and also for individual Members’ votes at the October Court meeting. The restriction would be solely upon the issue of named nominators.
14. Your Committee might accordingly wish to consider whether the threshold for candidature – currently ten nominations – should constitute such an upper limit on the number of nominations a candidate can receive.

#### **Implications**

15. Any changes to the process which require amendments to Standing Orders will be subject to the approval of the Court of Common Council, in the usual manner.

### **Conclusion**

16. Your Committee is asked to consider the proposed amendments to the process by which candidates for Chief Commoner are nominated, as set out at paragraphs 8 and 12.

### **Appendices**

- None.

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