



Report – Freedom Applications Committee

Freedom Application Fee

To be presented on Thursday, 3rd December 2015

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of
the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

SUMMARY

1. Your Committee has reviewed the policy which allows the fee applicable to Freedom applications to be waived for applicants who appear on the Ward List (City of London Electoral Roll) to be waived.
2. After careful consideration your Committee is of the view that waiving the fee is an historical anomaly which has been maintained over the years without review. We concluded that there is no longer any merit in retaining the current practice particularly as very few people made use of it. The waiving of the fee will however be retained for candidates standing for elections in the City.
3. This report provides Members with some background information on waiving the administrative fee and seeks your approval to the practice now being retained for electoral candidates only.

RECOMMENDATION

4. It is recommended that the waiver of the fee for processing Freedom applications for candidates who appear on the Ward List be dispensed with generally.

MAIN REPORT

1. Applicants for the Freedom of the City are required to pay a fee of £100 for processing an application. This fee does not apply to applicants who appear on the Ward List (City of London Electoral Roll).

2. Authority for waiving the Freedom application fee for those appearing on the Ward List was approved by the Court of Common Council on 15th July 1965. At that time the Court resolved "*that the Chamberlain be directed to admit to the Freedom of the City, without fee and without further order from this Court, all persons making application for that purpose, whose names are upon the Ward Lists for the City of London*". Prior to this there had been a tradition, since 1856, of the fee being charged at a lesser rate. The move was designed to widen the franchise. It was seen as a means of encouraging more participation in the governance of the City, reducing potential criticism of the Freedom qualification for Common Councilmen and Aldermen and making it less of an impediment for those wishing to stand for election to the Court of Common Council.
3. In addition to the fee being waived Ward List candidates have not needed the prior approval of the Court of Common Council to enable them to be admitted to the Freedom. This is the same arrangement that applies to candidates receiving the freedom by Patrimony and servitude
4. The number of people receiving the freedom as Ward List candidates in the last five years are as follows:-

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|------|----|
| 2010 | 55 |
| 2011 | 36 |
| 2012 | 55 |
| 2013 | 49 |
| 2014 | 29 |

So far for 2015, 45 people have received the Freedom in this manner.

5. Like other applicants, those applying for the Freedom via the Ward List require two nominators who have to be either Liverymen or Members of the City Corporation (Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Aldermen, Common Councilmen).
6. The statutory requirement for candidates standing for election as a Common Councilman or an Alderman in the City to be a Freeman has been raised over the years. Concerns have been expressed that the qualification could be used as a method of preserving perceptions of the City of London Corporation as a "Club" or a closed shop. To address this, a scheme was brought in whereby the City Corporation facilitates perspective candidates becoming Freeman automatically to enable them to be eligible to stand in the ward elections. To accommodate this further, the status of those entitled to nominate perspective candidates was widened from Members of the City Corporation and liverymen to anyone who could sign for a passport application.
7. In line with its enhanced role of monitoring the Freedom Applications process your Committee has reviewed the policy on waiving the fee applicable to applicants of the Freedom who appear on the Ward List. The Committee is of the view that the waiver is an historical anomaly which has been maintained over the years without review. It concluded that there was no longer any merit in retaining the current practice particularly as very few people made use of it. It was however of the view that whilst the practice should be dispensed with

generally, it should be retained for candidates standing for elections in the City.
The Court's approval is required to alter the policy.

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 13th day of October 2015.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Sir David Wootton, Alderman
Chairman, Freedom Applications Committee