

Report – Policy and Resources Committee

Election of Chief Commoner

To be presented on Thursday, 14th January 2016

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

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. Whilst 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.

Your Policy and Resources Committee has considered these proposals, namely the introduction of an official “campaign period” and the introduction of an upper limit to the number of nominations candidates can receive, and recommends that the Court of Common Council approves the amendments and authorises the requisite changes to Standing Orders (set out at Appendix 1).

RECOMMENDATION

That approval be given to:

- The introduction of an official start date of 1st September for prospective candidates to begin canvassing for support;
- The introduction of an upper limit to the number of nominations a candidate can receive, such that once ten nominations have been obtained the candidate is considered to be validly nominated and no further names in support of their nomination will be accepted;
- The requirement for candidates to submit the signatures of each of the ten Members nominating them to the Town Clerk in order to be considered validly nominated.

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 were identified by Members. These refinements specifically relate to the nominations process leading up to the October Court meeting each year.
3. With it being three years since the Post-Implementation review, it was considered timely to look once again at the arrangements with a view to identifying any further potential improvements or points of clarification.

Issues

Canvassing Period

4. Your Policy and Resources Committee gave consideration to the matter of the period in which candidates should begin to campaign, 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 was 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, it was felt that an official start date for this canvassing period of 1st September each year should be implemented.

Nominations Required

8. Your Policy and Resources Committee also gave consideration to the number of nominations required for a candidate to be validly nominated.
9. 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.
10. There was 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 could be unduly restricted.
11. Consequently, it was considered that an upper limit on the number of nominations a Member could receive should be introduced. 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.

12. 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.
13. It was further considered that prospective candidates should be required to obtain the signatures of each of the ten Members nominating them and submit them to the Town Clerk to confirm their candidature.

Conclusion

14. Honourable Members are asked to approve the proposed amendments to the process by which candidates for Chief Commoner are nominated and agree the associated minor changes to Standing Orders. These changes are set out at Appendix 1 and comprise minor amendments to the existing sub-section at 18(5) and the insertion of a new sub-section, to be labelled 18(6).

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

DATED this 19th day of November 2015.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

Mark Boleat
Chairman, Policy and Resources Committee

Proposed Amendments to Standing Orders

18. Chief Commoner

- (5) *Candidates for election to the Office of Chief Commoner shall be nominated by ~~at least~~ exactly 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. Submissions must be made in writing and accompanied by the signatures of the 10 Members supporting the candidate's nomination.*
- (6) *The beginning of the campaign period, in which candidates might canvass for support and obtain nominations, shall begin on 1 September of each year.*