

<b>Committee:</b> Policy and Resources	<b>Date:</b> 14 April 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Increasing Diversity in the Court of Common Council	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report Author:</b> Angela Roach, Principal Committee and Members Services Manager	

### **Summary**

1. In July 2015, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed that improving communication about elections to the Court of Common Council might help to increase the diversity of the Court's membership. This followed concerns expressed at an informal meeting of the Court of Common Council and informally by your Resource Allocation Sub-Committee. It also follows the Committee's consideration of a discussion paper on whether there were any barriers which might deter people from standing for election to Common Council.
2. The Policy Committee subsequently received a report in November which updated it on a number of actions which had been taken to mitigate some of these barriers and it also considered whether any further work could be undertaken.
2. Whilst no further actions were agreed, some additional work has been undertaken since that meeting. This report provides details of that work and seeks your views on a number suggestions which have been put forward by an informal group of Members.

### **Recommendations**

3. Members are asked to note the work undertaken since November 2015 and to consider whether any action should be taken with regard to the following:-
  - the creation of a welcome pack for new City business which explains what the City Corporation has to offer and how it works, co-ordinated by the internal communications office/communications teams;
  - running an early evening event to brief and engage with employee networks operating in businesses across the City about the City Corporation, co-ordinated by the Economic Development Office; and
  - the creation of an abbreviated version of the guide along the lines of the that set out in the Appendix to this report to assist Members in encouraging others to engage in the process.

## Main Report

### **Background**

1. Last year the Policy and Resources Committee agreed that improving communication about elections to the Court of Common Council might help to increase the diversity of the Court's membership. This followed concerns expressed at an informal meeting of the Court of Common Council and informally by your Resource Allocation Sub-Committee. It also follows the Committee's consideration of a discussion paper on whether there were any barriers which might deter people from standing for election to Common Council. Since then work has been undertaken to mitigate some of the barriers. Amongst other things, this included the development of a website page and undertaking research into what London boroughs do to ascertain the demographics of their Council.
2. At its meeting on 19 November 2015, the Policy and Resources Committee received a report updating it on the activities undertaken to mitigate some of the barriers. The Committee was also asked to consider whether any further work could be undertaken.

### **Engaging with Staff Networks**

3. You might recall that at the meeting it was suggested that more outreach work could be undertaken by engaging with the various employee networks operating in City businesses. The Town Clerk undertook to look into use of the City Corporation's Staff Networks as a means of communication with external networks and has since written to the various groups in order to promote the merits of becoming a Common Councilman more widely. Some networks, such as the Women's Inclusive Network, have already started to actively engage with other external networks, eg with RBS, and could use these contacts to promote the matter.
4. The Chairs and sponsors of the following networks were approach in this regard:-
  - Faith and Spiritual
  - Women's Inclusive
  - Black and Minority Ethnic
  - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
  - Carers
  - Disability Inclusive
5. As there was no formal network for the City of London Police, the officer who coordinates communications between internal and external police-linked networks was made aware of the aims of this initiative.

## **Informal Member-Level Diversity Group**

7. In an effort to do more, a small group of Members was convened by the Town Clerk to explore the issue of diversity and the barriers which might deter people from standing for election to Common Council further. The Group which comprised the following Members met informally at the beginning of March:-
  - Henry Colthurst
  - Marianne Fredericks
  - Wendy Hyde
  - Dhruv Patel
  - Tom Sleigh
  - Alderman Sir David Wootton
8. At that meeting the Members were of the view that the membership of the Court of Common Council should be diverse and more representative of the City. Whilst a number of other views were expressed, there were three suggestions which the informal Group felt would benefit from further consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee:-

**Welcome Pack for New City business:** It was suggested that in order to ensure businesses were engaged right from the start they needed to be provided with a welcome pack which explained what the City of London Corporation has to offer and how it works. Subject to your views, the pack could be in electronic form and contain relevant practical information on City services but should also contain a statement which encouraged businesses to register and to appoint voters who were representative of its workforce.

It should be noted that in January the Committee agreed to provide £20,000 to take a City Corporation 'Roadshow' to City businesses on topics of interest to their employees e.g. safety/cycling/open space/public health/air quality etc., with a clear message of 'have your say' at the 2017 elections. The aim is also to highlight matters of concern for people working in the City so that they can see the breadth of our work, ask questions and understand that they can influence this through exercising a vote.

**Engaging with External Employee Networks in the City:** The Group was keen to support the use of existing resources to promote the benefits of engaging in public service. It has therefore been suggested that an early evening Briefing, similar to the ones the Livery Committee already hosted for the Livery should be arranged, tailored and used to communicate with the various employee networks operating in City businesses. The details and network contacts were already available as part of Alderman Dame Fiona Woolf's mayoralty initiative on the Power of Diversity.

**Abbreviated Version of the Web Page:** Members were keen to play their part in promoting the benefits of standing for election to Common Council. It was suggested that a simple abbreviated version (one A4 page) of the "Becoming a Councillor" page on the website should be created to enable Members to assist in the engagement process. The Group did however acknowledge that Members had a vested interest and therefore there was a risk of self-promotion. If the Committee

was minded to support this, an example of what the abbreviated page might look like is attached as an appendix to this report.

9. If Members are minded to support the suggestions, it should be noted that there is no budget to accommodate an early evening briefing with employee networks or, depending on its format, the production of a welcome pack. Resources will therefore need to be provided in order to progress them appropriately.

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