

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Policy & Resources Committee – For Information	6 October 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Voter Registration and City of London Ward Elections 2017	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Simon Murrells – Assistant Town Clerk	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the preparations so far for the Common Council elections in March 2017, including steps taken to increase voter registration. Members may recall approving a budget of up to £90,000 for initiatives to improve voter registration and set out are brief details of progress in each area, including a City Roadshow which has been taken to several businesses in the City.

For residents, just over 300 more properties have returned their first set of registration forms this year compared to 2015. The response rate has increased from 27% in 2015 to 32% in 2016. Overall and at the time of writing, the number of firms registered so far has increased to 1,174. This is compared with 845 firms that had registered at the same point in 2015. The number of businesses that have registered online is over 650, which is an increase of 150 compared to the total number of businesses using this method in 2015.

Members are also asked to endorse the principle that the number of meetings of committees should be reduced to the minimum for the period after 17 February 2017.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report and endorse the principle that the number of meetings of committees should be minimised for the period after 17 February 2017.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. 23rd March 2017 sees the next City-wide elections for Common Councilmen and the purpose of this report is to update Members of the Policy & Resources Committee on the preparations for that event, including steps taken to increase voter registration.

2. In January 2016, a number of activities and proposals were agreed to ensure that as many people and businesses as possible are encouraged to register on the 2017/18 Ward Lists for the 2017 Ward elections. A budget of up to £90,000 was approved from your Committee's contingency for 2016/17 and charged to City Fund. The current spend from that budget is set out below.

### **Current Position**

3. The registration period for the 2017/18 Ward Lists commenced on 1 September 2016 and closes on 16 December 2017. Only persons who register on the 2017/18 Lists will be eligible to vote in the Common Council elections on 23 March next year. Members may recall that the previous 'carry-over' arrangement ceased to operate. Any voters appointed by businesses or residents removed from this year's Ward Lists because they had not registered still have the opportunity to be registered again in 2016 in time for the Common Council elections next March.
4. Generally, the City Corporation works to retain as high a number of voters as possible on the Ward Lists and there is a greater imperative to see as many residents and businesses registered in 2017 because of the ward elections which will take place. In light of this, the Policy & Resources Committee approved a number of proposals to increase awareness and promote greater registration and participation and this report provides an update on those actions and the impact they are having.

### **Online Registration**

5. In 2015 businesses that were already registered to vote had the option to re-register online and over 500 businesses opted to use that channel to do so. The option of online registration has now also been made available to unregistered businesses. As at 19 September, the number of businesses registering online was 650, which is an increase of 150 compared to the total number of businesses using this method of registration in 2015.

### **Communication**

6. A programme of communication about the 2017 elections and encouraging voter registration is underway and set out below are some examples so far:
  - The distribution of an election flyer with the City Occupier Database surveys;
  - Creation of an electronic campaign logo which has been added to signatures on emails;
  - Articles in Ward Newsletters;
  - Creation of the CityVote17 webpage on the City's website which will be the landing page for all information on the elections, linking to other voter-related pages;
  - Articles in CityView magazine;
  - Promotional 'business cards';
  - Promotional panels on display boards at Royal Exchange;

- City Corporation Roadshow (see below).
7. In October, businesses in the City that have not registered any voters (including those that have previously registered but have not so far re-registered) will be contacted for a second time by email and in hard-copy. A final reminder will be sent in November. In addition, efforts will be made for personal contact to be made to encourage registration. All new business voters on the Ward Lists will receive a letter welcoming them which is intended to introduce them the City of London Corporation explaining the services it provides and making sure they are aware that they are eligible to vote in City elections.
  8. The canvassing of the City's residents has also commenced. Registration forms were sent to each household in August with reminder forms sent to non-responding addresses in September. In October, canvassers will begin calling door-to-door to complete forms with residents who have still not registered. There has been an encouraging start to the residential canvass. Just over 300 more properties returned their first set of registration forms this year compared to 2015. The response rate for the first set of forms has increased from 27% in 2015 to 32% in 2016.

### **City Corporation Roadshow**

9. A City Corporation 'Roadshow' has been taken to several City businesses covering topics of concern 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. This has enabled people working in the City to see the breadth of our work, ask questions and understand that they can influence this through exercising a vote.
10. The Roadshows, which included a specially commissioned stand with backdrop, commenced in June at the food market held in Guildhall Yard. This was followed by visits to companies such as CBRE, M&G and further presence at the food markets in July and September. The Roadshow was taken to Accenture in September and there are plans to showcase it at the offices of AIG and UBS.
11. The Roadshows were well positioned to catch considerable numbers of workers at lunchtimes and there was a lot of interest. The opportunity was taken to inform people about their ability to become registered to vote but at the time of writing, it is difficult to judge how effective that message has been. The initiative was, however, clearly successful in helping to inform people who work in the City about the City Corporation's services, many of whom had no prior knowledge of the City Corporation or its activities.

### **Temporary Staff to Increase Voter registration**

12. The number of staff available to canvass businesses has been increased temporarily. Their job is to actively encourage businesses to register, identifying the correct contact in the firm for this purpose and following-up. This is probably the most effective part of the campaign and three further temporary staff were recruited for a period of eight months.

13. As at 21 September 2016 the number of firms registered was 1,174. This represents a significant increase when compared to the same period in 2015, when 845 firms had registered.

### **Social Media**

14. The City Occupiers Database Team responsible for registering businesses has developed a programme of social media interaction. The number of tweets with a clear message to encourage voter registration is increasing as we head towards the cut-off date for registration. There are also proposals to upload a clip on YouTube explaining how to go about registration.

### **Common Council Elections 2017**

15. The majority of the Wardmote and Polling arrangements have been finalised and Members will be contacted shortly to confirm the arrangements made in their Ward. Electoral Staff will also be meeting with Honorary Ward Clerks to brief them on their role and responsibilities for the election.
16. A briefing on the elections for Members is planned after the informal meeting of the Court on 10 November in the Old Library. There will also be a candidate briefing at 6pm on 10 November in Committee Rooms 3 and 4 which is open to everyone interested in standing for election. Members are welcome to attend either or both sessions. They will both give an overview of the arrangements for the elections and there will be an opportunity for questions on any aspect of the elections. There will be further candidate briefing sessions at the time of the elections which will go into some of the specifics of the election including polling and the count.
17. With the help of Members, a FAQ sheet has been produced to assist candidates with understanding the process. A copy is attached at Appendix A. In addition, information is available on the City's website on how to become a councillor and the work they do and, as Members are aware, there are also proposals being progressed aimed at encouraging diversity.
18. The CityVote17 webpage ([www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/cityvote17](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/cityvote17)) will be the landing page for all information regarding the elections. At present it links to relevant information on registering to vote for the elections, the election timetable and information for potential candidates. The page will be updated up to and throughout the election to include information regarding polling stations, the Wardmotes, postal voting and proxy voting. All official notices will also be published on these pages.

### **The Committee Timetable**

19. For the City elections in both 2009 and 2013, Members indicated that they would prefer to have no committee meetings in the period between the publication of the Notice of Election (for 2017 elections, that is 17 February) and the Wardmotes (for 2017, they are to be held on 22 March). This quiet, internal recess is fairly common practice elsewhere.

20. In light of previous experience, very few meetings of committees have been scheduled (for example, the Planning & Transportation Committee) in the diary after 17 February although the Court of Common Council will still meet on 9 March. Members are asked to endorse the principle of a reduced number of meetings in the period after 17 February 2017.

## Funding

21. Your Committee approved a budget of £90,000 to cover the anticipated cost of the various initiatives to promote voter registration. Set out below is the current expenditure position:

Heading	Budget	Expenditure	Remaining
Communication	£30,000.00	£5,892.00	£24,108.00
Roadshow	£20,000.00	£4,425.40	£15,574.60
Temporary Staff	£40,000.00	£32,867.61	£7,132.39
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£90,000.00</b>	<b>£43,185.01</b>	<b>£46,814.99</b>

## Conclusion

22. This report updates Members on the activities that have and are currently taking place to promote voter registration in advance of the 2017 Common Council elections. It shows that at this stage, the number of businesses and residents registering on the Ward Lists exceeds the numbers in registering at the same time in 2015. The report also gives information about the preparations for the 2017 elections.

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – FAQ Sheet for candidates standing in the 2017 Common Council elections

## Background Papers

Report, Town Clerk, to the Policy & Resources Committee January 2016

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## **APPENDIX A**

# City of London Elections for Common Councilmen – 2017

## Frequently Asked Questions

Set out below are some typical questions that people have when first considering whether they should stand for election as a councillor in the City of London (or Common Councilman as the position is known).

A visit to the City of London's website is an obvious first contact to learn more about the City Corporation and what it does. The information there tells you about the services provided not only for the financial and commercial heart of Britain, the 'Square Mile', but those provided for London more generally and, in many cases, for the Nation. Further details can be found at <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-the-city/about-us/Pages/default.aspx>

Becoming an elected Common Councilman or councillor in the City is similar in most respects to the process for election to a local authority. In both cases candidates must be 18 years of age and a British citizen or a citizen of a Commonwealth or European Union Country. As elsewhere, candidates must then also meet one of a number of other qualifications. As a result of differences in legislation, the qualifications in the City are slightly different from those at local authorities.

Information about this can be found in the sections below but you can also discover more on the City's website at <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-the-city/elections-and-wards/Pages/becoming-a-councillor.aspx>

## Standing for Election – the Criteria

### **Q: How do I know if I can stand for election?**

**A:** To stand for election as a Common Councilman in the City of London, you must meet all of the requirements listed below at A-C and at least one of the requirements listed below at D – F. You do not need to live or work in the Ward in which you intend to stand.

#### You must:

- A.** be aged 18 years or over; and
- B.** be a British, Irish or Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of another member state of the European Union; and
- C.** be a Freeman of the City of London (for those who are not already, the City will arrange for the freedom to be given and at no cost. Please contact Seth Alker, the Electoral Services Manager to arrange for this. Mr Alker's contact details can be found below)

#### You must also fulfil at least one of the following requirements:

- D.** be registered on the City of London Ward Lists; or
- E.** own freehold or leasehold land in the City. In practice, this can be as simple as having a nominal interest in a small space. For example, this could be just a very small part of an office. (It should be noted that while this would make people eligible to become a

candidate for election it would not make people eligible to vote in City elections as that requires actual occupancy of the premises concerned); or

**F.** have resided in the City for the whole of the 12 months preceding the date of nomination and until the date of election

If you would like to discuss your eligibility in more detail please contact the Electoral Services Manager, Seth Alker (details below).

**Q: Do I need to represent a political party?**

**A:** Candidates may represent a political party if they wish, however the vast majority of current members are independent.

**Q: How do I become a candidate?**

**A:** Candidates must submit nomination papers at the beginning of the election they intend to stand in. Those papers have to be signed by 5 voters in the Ward (see below for information about how to find out who your voters are and how you can communicate with them).

There is a specified period of about a week at the beginning of the election during which candidates must submit their nomination forms. **For the Common Council elections in March 2017, this period runs from Friday 17 February until noon on Tuesday 28 February 2017.**

**Q: How do I obtain the nomination papers?**

The nomination papers and other forms and information regarding the election will be available from the Electoral Services Office at Guildhall shortly before the start of the election on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2017, as part of a candidate pack. You can contact the Electoral Services Manager (details below) if you wish to be added to the mailing list of potential candidates, so that you can be kept informed about when the candidate pack is available and when your papers will need to be submitted.

It is important to understand that if a potential candidate does not submit valid nomination papers before the deadline then they cannot stand in that election.

**Q: Are all nominations accepted?**

**A:** All nomination forms are checked by the City's Electoral Services team to ensure that they have been completed correctly and that the 5 voters in the Ward who have nominated a candidate are eligible to do so.

Candidates must also state which of the criteria for becoming a candidate they meet (these are set out above). The Electoral Services team will happily check nomination papers informally before they are finally submitted – this will allow candidates to correct any errors prior to submission. If the nomination forms are not correctly completed when they are formally submitted then they will not be accepted.

It should be noted that all candidates' nomination forms are available for inspection by the public after the close of nominations which is noon on 28 February 2017.

**Q: Do I need a deposit**

**A:** No payment will be required at any stage.

## **Campaigning**

### **Q: What is an election agent and do I need to appoint one?**

**A:** Election agents are responsible in law for the proper management of a candidate's election campaign, including finances and literature, and should be knowledgeable of the relevant legislation surrounding the campaign. You can appoint a named person to be your election agent, or you can act as your own agent. If you do not appoint an agent, you automatically become your own agent.

### **Q: When will I know who I am standing against?**

**A:** The "statement of persons nominated", which is a list of candidates standing in each Ward, will be published on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017.

### **Q: Are there any limits on campaign expenses?**

**A:** From the start of the election on 17<sup>th</sup> February to the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017 candidates have a limit on how much they may spend on their campaign. This is £266 plus 5.2p per voter.

Following the election, a candidate's election agent (or the candidate if they have no agent) must submit a declaration of the expenses incurred – including copies of receipts and invoices. Information regarding expenses will be included in the detailed Guidance to Candidates and Agents which is part of the candidate pack. This will give general advice on what is and is not covered by the expenses spending limit. The Electoral Commission can also provide guidance and advice to candidates.

It is important to note that money spent before a person becomes a candidate counts against the spending limit if the goods or services purchased are used after the person becomes a candidate.

### **Q: Will my expenses be reimbursed?**

**A:** Expenses will not be reimbursed.

### **Q: Are there any rules around campaign literature?**

**A:** Yes. All campaign material (printed and electronic) should include an imprint (footer) so that it is clear who has produced it and on who's behalf. This will be covered in more detail in the Guidance to Candidates and Agents which is part of the candidate pack.

### **Q: Are there any debates or hustings between the candidates?**

**A:** A "Wardmote" or Ward Meeting, will take place in each ward on Wednesday 22 March 2017 - the day before the election (the timings and venues will be confirmed nearer to the elections). All voters in the Ward are invited to attend the meeting, and candidates will have the opportunity to address the meeting. Voters have the opportunity to ask candidates questions.

### **Q: Will there always be a poll?**

**A:** If there are no more candidates than there are seats available, i.e. if the election is uncontested, those candidates standing will be declared to have been elected. If there are more candidates than there are seats, then an election will take place.



## **The Electorate**

### **Q: Who is allowed to vote in City elections?**

**A:** Uniquely, in addition to City residents, many businesses and other organisations are eligible to appoint voters in City ward elections. The annual update of the Ward Lists (the register of voters) takes place through the autumn and the final deadline to register to vote in the March 2017 elections is 16 December 2016.

### **How do I know who my electors are and how can I communicate with them?**

**A:** A copy of the Ward List (the register of voters) for the ward you are standing in will be included in the candidate packs that will be available shortly before the start of the election on 17 February 2017. The List contains the names of the people who are registered to vote.

Please be aware that these Ward Lists are subject to data protection legislation and may only be used for electoral purposes. Care must be taken of them. The legislation surrounding data handling can be found <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act>.

[When you know who the voters are you can make contact with them in writing, in person or if you find out an address for them, by email.](#)

## **The Election**

### **Q: How do voters cast their vote?**

**A:** Like all other UK elections, voters can either vote at their allocated polling station, or chose to vote by post. Voters may also appoint someone to vote on their behalf (a proxy) if they have a particular reason why they cannot attend their polling station on polling day.

### **Q: How will voters know where to vote?**

**A:** Each voter is allocated a polling station. Each Ward has at least one polling station - a couple of the larger Wards have two. Voters will be sent a Notice of Election letter at the beginning of the election, and then a couple of weeks before polling day will be sent a poll card. These will advise them of the location of the polling station in their ward.

Voters will also be able to find out this information on our website:

[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/cityvote17](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/cityvote17)

### **Q: When will voters be able to cast their vote?**

**A:** Polling Stations will be open on Thursday 23 March, between 8am and 8pm. If a voter has arranged a postal vote, their ballot paper will be sent to them on or around 10 March and their completed vote must be returned by 8pm on polling day.

### **Q: How many candidates can a person vote for?**

**A:** A voter may vote for as many candidates as there are vacancies. In other words if the Ward has two Common Councilmen, a voter may vote for up to two candidates. If the Ward has ten Common Councilmen, a voter may vote for up to 10 candidates.

### **Q: When and where are the votes counted and the results announced?**

**A:** The count for the election will take place directly after the poll closes at a venue in the Ward – often this will be at the polling station. Candidates and their Agents are entitled to attend and scrutinise proceedings. The result is announced officially at a second Wardmote (ward meeting) which will take place when the counting of votes has been completed.

## **After the Election**

### **Q: What happens if I am elected?**

**A:** If you are successfully elected as a Common Councilman you will be asked by the Alderman who is presiding over the Wardmote meeting to make a Declaration of Office and sign up to the City Corporation's Code of Conduct for Members. You will subsequently be admitted formally at a meeting of the Common Council on **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2017** at 1.00pm.

### **Q: How will I know what is expected of me?**

**A:** There will be a comprehensive induction programme for all new Members coordinated by the Town Clerk's Office at Guildhall.

## **Key Dates**

**17<sup>th</sup> February** – Publication of the Notice of Election – the official start of the election, and the start of the period in which nomination forms can be submitted.

**17<sup>th</sup> February** – Limits on campaign spending begin

**28<sup>th</sup> February** – Deadline for submission of Nomination Forms (12 noon)

**2<sup>nd</sup> March** – Publication of the Statement of Persons nominated (list of candidates)

**8<sup>th</sup> March** – Deadline for applications to vote by post

**15<sup>th</sup> March** – Deadline for applications to vote by proxy

**22<sup>nd</sup> March** – Wardmote (Ward meeting)

**23<sup>rd</sup> March** – Election (Polling Stations open 8am-8pm)

**23<sup>rd</sup> March** – Votes counted and result announced

**27<sup>th</sup> April** – First meeting of the Court of Common Council

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