

Report – Policy and Resources Committee

Common Hall: Election of Lord Mayor 2019

To be presented on Thursday, 17th May 2018

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

SUMMARY

The dates of Common Hall are fixed as Midsummers' Day (for the election of Sheriffs) and Michaelmas Day (for the election of Lord Mayor). Provision does exist to vary these dates in the event that either falls on a Saturday or Sunday, in which case the relevant Common Hall is moved to the Monday immediately following.

There is also, however, provision within Acts of Common Council to reschedule Common Hall in the event that it falls on the same date as a major religious festival, provided a notice period of at least one year is provided. It has been observed that the Election of Lord Mayor in 2019 falls on the same date as Rosh Hashanah, a significant Jewish religious festival; consequently, there is scope for the provisions of the relevant Act of Common Council to be invoked and the date to be moved. In the event that it is determined that the election should be moved, a formal resolution by the Court of Common Council is required.

Responsibility for overseeing arrangements for Common Hall rests with the Livery Committee, which has been consulted and has confirmed it would endorse such a rescheduling, should this be the will of the Court of Common Council. The Policy and Resources Committee and General Purposes Committee of Aldermen have also endorsed this change.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to resolve that the election of Lord Mayor in 2019 should be moved to Wednesday 2 October, to avoid a clash with Rosh Hashanah.

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. Each year, the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs for the year ensuing are elected by the Livery at Common Hall. This is proscribed by primary legislation, with the details governing the specific arrangements set in turn by Act of Common Council.
2. Common Hall meets twice per annum for the purpose of these elections – in June for the Election of Sheriffs, and in September for the Election of Lord Mayor.

Issue

3. The specific date for the Election of Lord Mayor is fixed by Act of Common Council as Michaelmas Day, i.e. 29 September. Similarly, the Election of Sheriffs is also fixed as Midsummers' Day, i.e. 24 June.
4. When either date falls on a weekend, the Act of Common Council of 22 March 1973 provides that:-

1. As from the date of the making and passing of this Act whenever Midsummer Day or Michaelmas Day shall happen to fall upon either a Saturday or a Sunday the election of Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, [...], [...] of this City shall be held and take place on the Monday next immediately following either of those days any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

5. In 2019, Michaelmas Day falls on a Sunday. Normally, the date of the election of Lord Mayor would therefore be moved to Monday 30 September, in accordance with the above section of the 22 March 1973 Act.
6. However, Monday 30 September 2019 is also the date on which Rosh Hashanah (a two-day festival marking Jewish New Year, which begins at dusk on 29 September) falls that year.
7. Again, there is provision within the same Act of Common Council to alter the date of Common Hall, if desired, should the date of the election of Lord Mayor fall on "a major religious festival". The relevant extract is as follows:

5. Notwithstanding the provisions contained in any Act of Common Council (including this Act) relating to the day of election of Lord Mayor or any custom to the contrary it shall be lawful for the Court of Common Council and that Court is hereby empowered in any year in order to avoid an election on the day of any major religious festival to appoint a day for the election of Lord Mayor other than Michaelmas Day by a formal resolution of the Court passed not less than one year before the said day of election.

8. Although immaterial in the context of this report, for the sake of completeness it should be noted that the position is slightly different for the Election of Sheriffs, where there is more flexibility to move the date for any special cause and the formal resolution of the Court does not have to be passed a year in advance. The Act of Common Council of 21 January 1932 provides that:-

3. *[The General day of election of Sheriffs of this City shall be yearly the twenty-fourth day of June, unless the same shall happen to be a Saturday or a Sunday, in which case the election shall be on the Monday then next following.] Provided always that it shall be lawful for the Court of Common Council, and that Court is hereby empowered, in any year for any special cause to appoint a day for the election of Sheriffs and other Officers usually elected on Midsummer Day by the Liverymen of the several Companies of this City in Common Hall assembled other than that above mentioned, by a formal Resolution of the Court.*

Consideration

9. Members' views were therefore sought as to whether the date of the election of Lord Mayor should be moved in 2019. Consideration was particularly given as to the potential impact on those Liverymen who are practicing members of the Jewish faith and whether or not keeping the date as it currently stands might preclude them from exercising their ability to attend and cast their vote.
10. The Great Hall has been reserved for Wednesday 2 October 2019 should the date need to be moved and it is recommended that, should a rescheduling be approved, this be the date on which the Election be held. This would keep it as close as possible to the original date so as to minimise disruption.
11. The Admission of Sheriffs, currently scheduled for 27 September 2019, would remain unchanged.
12. In accordance with the Act of Common Council, any date change to the Election of Lord Mayor must be made by the Common Council through the passing of a formal resolution, not less than one year prior to the scheduled date.
13. Whilst the Livery Committee is responsible for overseeing arrangements for Common Hall, it is not a committee of the Court of Common Council and therefore cannot report to it.
14. Equally, whilst the views of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen are also integral to any final decision, it is also not a body of Common Council and cannot report directly. Therefore, the Policy and Resources Committee, which has responsibility for those matters not specifically allocated to other committees and also considers general electoral matters, was asked to consider this proposal and make the formal recommendation to the Court of Common Council, subject to the views of the other bodies.
15. All three Committees consequently agreed that the date should be moved to 2 October 2019, in view of the likely clash.
16. Whichever the decision, the confirmed date of the Election will be communicated to the wider Livery accordingly.

Conclusion

17. Members are asked to consider the clash of the Election of Lord Mayor in 2019 with Rosh Hashanah and to determine whether the Election should be rescheduled to 2 October 2019.

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

DATED this 15th day of March 2018.

SIGNED on behalf of the Working Party.

Catherine McGuinness, Deputy
Chairman, Policy and Resources Committee