

TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

21 February 2019

FROM: **ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE**

16 January 2019

17. **QUESTIONS**

A Member raised the point that the terms Chair, Chairman, and Chairwoman could all be used by Members and it would be helpful if the Establishment Committee could issue some guidance on this matter.

The Comptroller and City Solicitor responding advised that it was his understanding that the conventional term used at the City of London Corporation was Chairman, and this was not unusual within Conservative-led authorities. Two senior Members had recently requested to be referred to as Chair and those were personal requests which did not change the convention, it was a different situation for two Members to request to move to a gender-neutral phrase than for a man to be referred to as Chairwoman. There were certain dangers with this approach and the City Corporation may need to take a formal view on that.

The Comptroller and City Solicitor explained that the City Corporation was subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty and therefore must have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not and foster or encourage good relations between those two groups. The Comptroller and City Solicitor explained that if someone does not have a protected characteristic and invades the space of someone who does, this could have an adverse impact on how the City Corporation would be perceived as an organisation.

The Comptroller and City Solicitor explained the City Corporation should exercise care in considering how to address this issue or it could bring the organisation into disrepute. The Comptroller added that at its last meeting, the Policy and Resources Committee had received a report of the Diversity Working Party where Members agreed in principle to the recommendation that the City Corporation change its conventional term of Chairman to Chair, but people could still be called Chairman if they wished.

The Chair noted that they had received a positive response to their decision to use the term Chair, whilst they were happy to be referred to as Chairman, they preferred the term Chair and this was a cultural change which would take time.

A Member responding to the comments made explained that they would welcome the consideration of Common Councilman to be changed to Common Councillor. The Chair explained this was not a matter for this Committee but had been considered by the Diversity Working Party.

A Member explained they were of the view that the guiding principles should be driven by courtesy and sensible limits should be established.

The Town Clerk commented that the advice provided by the Comptroller and City Solicitor had been helpful and the Public Sector Equality Duty was useful on this matter. This was about promoting and fostering relationships and there was a reputational risk, the Town Clerk explained this was an issue for Members to consider and use of the title Chairwoman

by a man could be seen to diminish the role of women. The Policy and Resources Committee had given a steer that individuals should be called what they wished within bounds and the Committee would revisit the matter to give a steer to officers on the policy.

Members agreed that the position suggested earlier would be the best approach; sensible, pragmatic and courteous.

The Committee asked that a minute of this discussion be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee for their information.