

<b>Committee(s)</b> Policy and Resources Committee General Purposes Committee of Aldermen	<b>Date:</b> 14 October 2021 19 October 2021
<b>Subject:</b> Reviewed and Updated Wardmote Book	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>6 and 8</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Comptroller and City Solicitor and Town Clerk and Chief Executive	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Edward Wood, Chief Solicitor	

### **Summary**

The Wardmote Book is the City Corporation's technical manual for ward elections. Members recently requested sight of a new edition, in readiness for the resumption of elections in March 2022. An updated version is appended to this report with the latest revisions shown as tracked changes. The most topical or notable amendments are also set out in this report.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note the updates to the Wardmote Book.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. The Wardmote Book is the City Corporation's technical manual for ward elections, which attempts to draw together and summarise the complex mosaic of national and local legislation, together with Acts of Common Council and convention. It is in regular use by officers and is also published on the City Corporation's website for use by Members, candidates, agents and members of the public who wish to learn about the detail of the electoral process. It is not meant to take the place of more focussed guidance for residents and businesses during the canvass, and for candidates and agents during the election period, which is also produced.

2. The Wardmote Book has historically been updated as the need has arisen, and generally in advance of the ordinary elections of Common Councilmen every four years. The last revision was in 2014, ahead of the ordinary elections in 2017. Members recently requested sight of a new edition, in readiness for the resumption of elections in March 2022. Given the City Corporation's drive to enhance voter engagement, it seems appropriate to build in a formal review process before each 'all out' election to be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee and the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen, as the Committees with responsibility for the oversight of elections. This will not prevent any revisions which become necessary in the interim, for example due to significant legislative changes, and it is proposed that the Committees will be informed of any such amendments between formal reviews.

## Updates

3. The updated version of the Wardmote Book is appended to this report and the most recent revisions are shown as tracked changes. The revised Wardmote Book has been prepared in consultation with relevant colleagues in the Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department, the Town Clerk's Department and the Remembrancer's Office. It is not proposed to summarise all of the changes in that document, but some of the most topical or notable amendments are as follows:
  - (i) There are various references to the impact of Covid-19 and the need to pause ward elections until 2022. The recent Acts of Common Council postponing elections of Common Councilmen and Aldermen have been referenced, together with the suspension of the relevant Aldermanic undertakings.
  - (ii) Gender neutral language has been adopted where possible.
  - (iii) There is a new reference to shared workspaces, to clarify that they generally do not satisfy the requirements for voter qualification (page 5).
  - (iv) There is a new reference to remote working, to clarify that employees who work remotely for part of the time, or even the majority of the time, can still count towards the workforce of a qualifying body in appropriate circumstances (page 7).
  - (v) There is some new text to clarify that a director, etc. of a qualifying body is automatically treated as having their principal or only place of work at the relevant premises, for the purposes of being appointed as a voter (page 8).
  - (vi) There is some new text to clarify the nationality requirement for Aldermanic candidates (pages 15-16).
  - (vii) There is reference to the fact that Common Councilmen elected in March 2022 will serve shorter three year terms (page 19).
  - (viii) Some additional information has been provided in relation to election publicity and election expenses (pages 31-32).

- (ix) The expenses and fees payable to Honorary Ward Clerks, Beadles and election staff have been updated (page 63).
  - (x) The timetable for the 'all out' Common Council elections in March 2022 has been fully updated (pages 74-78).
  - (xi) A new table of the main legislative provisions that apply to ward elections has been compiled for ease of reference (pages 91-92).
4. The new version of the Wardmote Book, with the tracking removed, will be published on the City Corporation's website in the normal way. It is worth noting that a new Elections Bill is currently before Parliament, that once enacted will affect the administration and conduct of elections generally and will also impact on ward elections in a number of ways. It is not likely to receive Royal Assent before the elections in March 2022 but will probably necessitate a further review of the Wardmote Book later in the year.

## **Conclusion**

5. The Wardmote Book has been updated ahead of the 'all out' elections of Common Councilmen in March 2022. The Elections Bill currently before Parliament will probably necessitate a further review of the Wardmote Book shortly thereafter.

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## **Appendix**

Updated Wardmote Book with tracked changes