

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE OF ALDERMEN
Tuesday, 14 September 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen held at
Guildhall on Tuesday, 14 September 2021 at 10.45 am

Present

Members:

Alderman Sir David Wootton (Chairman)
The Rt Hon. the Lord Mayor, Alderman William Russell (Deputy Chairman)
Alderman Sir Andrew Parmley
Alderman Sir Charles Bowman
Alderman Sir Peter Estlin
Alderman Vincent Keaveny
Alderman & Sheriff Alison Gowman
Alderman David Graves
Alderman John Garbutt
Alderman Timothy Hailes
Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli
Alderman Robert Howard
Alderman Alastair King
Alderman Gregory Jones QC
Alderman & Sheriff Nicholas Lyons
Alderman Prem Goyal
Alderman Professor Emma Edhem
Alderwoman Susan Langley
Alderman Bronek Masojada

Officers:

Polly Dunn	- Town Clerk's Department
Rhiannon Leary	- Town Clerk's Department
Sarah Phillips	- Town Clerk's Department
Michael Cogher	- Comptroller and City Solicitor
Paul Double	- City Remembrancer
Paul Wright	- Remembrancer's Department
Nigel Lefton	- Remembrancer's Department
Caroline Jack	- Executive Director and Private Secretary to the Lord Mayor
Adam Rout	- Mansion House
Mark Gettleson (Item 3)	- Town Clerk's Department
Sonia Virdee	- Chamberlain's Department
Bukola Soyombo	- Chamberlain's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Aldermen Nicholas Anstee, Sir Alan Yarrow, Robert Hughes-Penney and Baroness Patricia Scotland of Asthal Q.C.

2. **MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **ELECTION ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES - UPDATE**

Mark Gettleson (Election Engagement Manager) provided an update for the Committee in respect of the City Corporation's election engagement activities.

Members were advised that initial feedback about the voter registration process had indicated that a large majority of people were unclear about the City's electoral processes, including voter registration and how to stand for election. Members were advised that significant progress had been made over recent months with the aim of enhancing provision of clear information about all aspects of the City's electoral arrangements, particularly in an enhanced digital format.

It was noted that the new elections website (<https://www.speakforthecity.com/>) had recently gone live and information about this site was being promoted as widely as possible. Mr Gettleson provided a walk-through of the website which provided clear information about the registration process for both residents and workers in the City; it enabled individuals to check how many votes were allocated to a registered business and the key point of contact at the business; and it also provided clarification about the eligibility criteria and how to stand for election. Information about candidates would be accessible on the site in due course. It was noted that the aim was to direct as much traffic as possible so various tools and social media platforms would be used to profile the site. Information about the site and how to profile it would be shared with Members and officers across the organisation, particularly those departments that engaged with external stakeholders. Members stressed the importance of corporate-wide input into this activity in order to maximise voter registration and promote greater diversity amongst future candidates.

Members were advised that enhanced functionality had been introduced which enabled officers to be proactive and follow up where responses were not received from individual businesses in respect of registration. Ahead of the registration deadline of 16 December 2021, data processing was well underway, and it was evident that a large number of registrants had not features on the 2020 Ward Lists. It was noted that updated information from the City Occupier's Database (COD) would be sent to each Alderman once the latest tranche of updates had been completed.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr Gettleson for his update.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

4. **ALDERMANIC ELECTIONS AND MEETING DATES IN 2022**

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk setting out a revised programme of meeting dates for the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen in 2022.

The revised programme of meetings in 2022 was set out alongside the dates of the Wardmotes which were expected to be held in 2022, for up to nine Aldermanic elections to take place as of March 2022. The paper before Members identified where dates for meetings of the General Purposes Committee of Alderman or the Court of Aldermen would be revised, or where additional meetings would be scheduled, to reflect the Aldermanic election timetable.

There was some discussion regarding the proposed electoral timetable on the basis that at previous meetings of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen in 2020 and in early 2021, the Committee had agreed to defer Aldermanic elections for a number of reasons and elections would not therefore take place before March 2022. As the Court of Common Council's Ward Elections would take place on 24 March 2022 (for contested seats), some Members queried why Aldermanic elections could not commence before 11 May 2022. Further to this, clarification was sought as to why the elections had to be staggered across four months rather than holding them all on one date, where vacancies would have already arisen before March 2022 in normal circumstances. Several Members commented on the risk of being seen to manage and configure the electoral arrangements which was not, in their mind, in the spirit of transparency.

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- Require clarity about the rationale for the approach set out in the report;
- What are the specific considerations as to Aldermanic elections should not be triggered as of the February 2021 meeting of the Court of Aldermen?;
- What are the specific considerations as to why some of the Aldermanic elections should not take place on 24 March 2022?;
- Noting that Aldermen are elected for life but the convention of surrendering one's Office upon six years is observed by Aldermen, what, if any, legal considerations apply i.e. can an Alderman be told when to surrender their Office and, if seeking re-election, be asked to serve for only 5 years?
- Important to consider, in good time, the induction arrangements for all new Aldermen. It was suggested that an away-day be scheduled in good time so all candidates were aware that this would take place and they were able to diarise this as a priority.
- Pre-election advice to potential candidates – it was suggested that there should also be greater clarity about who to contact amongst those on the Court about standing for election and the role/work of an Alderman. This would be an opportunity to meet serving Aldermen and really understand what the role entailed, prior to election.
- What is the legal basis for how the Aldermanic elections are to be managed and who has the authority to decide when elections take place?
- It is critical that the best calibre of individuals put themselves forward as candidates for election and for the 2022 electoral timetable to be made public as soon as possible.

Several Members commented on the need to stagger the elections to avoid a significant change in membership in one go. It was suggested that by accelerating the timetable and commencing elections before 11 May 2022, the

Court would not be criticised. Other Members however commented that whilst the elections had legitimately been delayed until March 2022, on the basis that Covid-19 restrictions had now lifted and parliamentary elections were held at the same time, as were the Common Council elections, the Court of Aldermen should avoid being out of step unless there was a clear rationale for a different approach.

As there was no majority support for the programme as set out in the report before Members, the Town Clerk was requested to submit a further report to the Committee's October meeting for further consideration. This report would address the points raised in the discussion so a rationale for the 2022 election timetable could be agreed in due course.

Resolved:- That the Town Clerk prepare, in consultation with the Comptroller and City Solicitor and the Electoral Services Manager, a report for submission to the 19 October 2021 meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen providing clarification about the various points raised in discussion on 14 September 2021, so a rationale for the 2022 election timetable can be agreed in due course.

5. **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman commented on the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen's Future Work Programme and advised Members that some preliminary discussions had taken place about the development of an Aldermanic Impact Report (Impact report 2021 – Court of Aldermen), following previous discussions about how this activity could highlight the work of the Court of Aldermen and the role of the Aldermen across a spectrum of internal and external spheres.

Members were advised that during a recent meeting involving several members of the Committee as well as officers from the Town Clerk's Department, Innovation and Growth, Communications, the Remembrancer's Department and Mansion House, the aim, format, audience and content of a future report were discussed. Noting that officers, with Member input, were working towards a deadline of 12th November 2021 (Silent Ceremony) for production of the Impact Report, each Alderman was encouraged to submit feedback to the Town Clerk by 1 October 2021 about their activities over the past 18 months – the focus being on having impact. Members were advised that an update would be provided at the Committee's next meeting.

Linked to the issue of explaining the role of an Alderman and demystifying the work of the Court, Alderman Masojada explained that he would be speaking at the City Briefing on 21 September and he would welcome any feedback from those that had previously spoken at a briefing.

Resolved:- That:-

- (i) the Future Work Programme be noted; and
- (ii) all contributions in respect of the Aldermanic Impact Report be submitted to the Town Clerk by 1 October 2021.

6. **INNOVATION AND GROWTH ADVISORY BOARD (IGAB): BOARD NOMINATIONS AND NAME CHANGE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Innovation and Growth presenting the names of the final two external Members of the Innovation and Growth Advisory Board (IGAB) for confirmation, and a proposed name change for the Innovation and Growth Advisory Board (IGAB). It was noted that these matters would be considered, for approval, by the Policy and Resources Committee on 16 September 2021.

In response to a query about access to reports and minutes associated with the meetings of the IGAB, the Chairman explained that the Advisory Board - effectively an informal working group- would undertake its work in private thus enabling the membership, of which there were a number of external stakeholders, to have restricted conversations.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

7. **COMMON HALL - UPDATE**

The Chairman provided a brief update in respect of the arrangements for Common Hall (Election of Lord mayor) which would take place on 29 September 2021.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

8. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

10. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with the Court of Aldermen’s Disclosure Arrangement (Standing Order 25), the public shall be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen have determined, having had due regard to the Disclosure Arrangement, that disclosure should not be permitted.

11. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

The Committee considered the non-public minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen held on 5 July 2021.

Resolved:- That the non-public minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen held on 5 July 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

12. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LIST**

The Committee considered the Non-Public Outstanding Actions List which had been updated since the last meeting on 5 July 2021.

Resolved: - That the Non-Public Outstanding Actions List be noted.

13. **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

The Committee received the list of forthcoming events.

Resolved:- That the list of forthcoming events be noted.

14. **OLD BAILEY ARRANGEMENTS - UPDATE**

The Committee received an update in respect of arrangements at the Old Bailey.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

15. **LORD MAYOR'S SHOW - UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Lord Mayor's Limited provided the Committee with an update about the arrangements for the Lord Mayor's Show 2021.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

16. **ALDERMANIC ALLOWANCE - UPDATE**

The Chairman updated the Committee about the Aldermanic Allowance.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

17. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no questions.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 12.27 pm

Chairman

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