

Committee General Purposes Committee of Aldermen	Date: 10 May 2022
Subject: Guidance for Liveries and Guilds – Conduct of Virtual Business	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Rhiannon Leary, Town Clerk's Department	

Summary

1. This report sets out the current practice in respect of the decision-making processes of Livery Companies and Guilds, specifically in relation to the conduct of virtual meetings. Members are asked to consider whether certain aspects of the waiver should be made permanent.

Main Report

2. Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the general expectation of the Court of Aldermen, as outlined in the guidance issued on the formation of new guilds or companies, would have been that all Guild or Company business should be conducted within the City boundaries. However, given the pandemic and the government's consequent advice on social distancing and the introduction of periods of national lockdown, refreshed guidance for the Livery and Guilds regarding the conduct of company business (including court meetings and the binding of apprentices) was agreed by the General Purposes Committee and the Court of Aldermen in late March 2020. That guidance confirmed that Livery and Guild business could be conducted virtually and would be valid. Furthermore, it was proposed and agreed on 28 April 2021, by the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen, that the guidance in place in relation to the conduct of Guild and Livery Company business should be extended.
3. This matter was further considered under the Court of Aldermen's urgency procedures (Standing Order 42) in November, on the basis that further clarification had been requested by the Livery about the Court of Aldermen's expectations and that the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen would not meet before 7 December 2021. It was subsequently agreed on 8 November 2021, by the Town Clerk following consultation with the Chairmen of the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen and the Court of Aldermen, that the guidance in place in relation to the conduct of Guild and Livery Company business would be extended until 31 March 2022. A further extension, until 31 October 2022, was subsequently agreed by the General Purposes Committee and the Court of Aldermen on 8 February 2022.

Current position

4. Feedback received from the Livery has been overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of conducting business virtually, including increased recruitment and retention of members as well as greater participation in the Company's activities: both those of a business nature and social events. Clarity has been sought by the Livery, consequently, in relation to the possible continuation of virtual meetings. The General Purposes Committee of Aldermen, in light of more flexible ways of working being now incorporated into most business practices, is asked to consider whether certain aspects Guild or Livery business may take place on a permanent basis, as the Guild or Livery Company sees fit, including physically, in hybrid form or virtually.

Recommendations

- i) that, insofar as the Ordinances or By-Laws of any Company with Livery, Company without Livery or Guild contain restrictive or prescriptive provisions as to the location and timing of:
 - a) committee meetings;
 - b) social and charitable events;
 - c) the binding of apprentices (*subject to the requirement for the indentures to be entered within six months of the decision being taken in the Books of the Chamberlain of London*)the Court of Aldermen agrees to allow such provisions to be determined by the Guild or Livery company concerned.
- ii) that it be agreed that ceremonial business, election, installation or admission of any members or officers conducted by Guild and Livery Companies take place only on a physical basis.

Contact

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NB: Relevant background papers are available upon request.