

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Civic Affairs Sub-Committee – For Decision Policy and Resources Committee – For decision	Dated: 29/01/2025 13/02/2025
Subject: Members’ Bedroom Policy	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides business enabling functions 	Providing excellent services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of:	Town Clerk
Report author:	Chris Rumbles

Summary

This report presents an updated Members’ Bedroom Policy for approval. Policy and Resources Committee were due to consider an updated Members’ Bedroom Policy at their meeting on 16 November 2023, following a recommendation of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee.

Proposed updates to the policy at the time covered a range of areas including an updated booking procedure, restrictions on block bookings, dealing with and responding to complaints and allegations of misuse, dealing with outstanding invoices, usage and providing clarity relating to official / non-official usage, eligibility criteria and providing information on an ‘Approved list of users’ that had previously been identified as users of the bedrooms in addition to Members.

Proposals relating to a revised and updated charging structure to be applied for use of the bedrooms had also been included. Following a number of questions and concerns having been raised regarding the level of increase in charges proposed, the impacts of these on Members being able to fully carry out their duties as elected Members, potential social mobility and equality impacts the proposed increase in

charges would present, Policy and Resources Committee agreed to withdraw the item from the agenda.

This has resulted in a number of routine and straightforward administrative and procedural proposals that had originally been included having since fallen away and not having been implemented. This report is now looking to address those areas that have fallen away and is seeking approval of an updated Members' Bedroom Policy (Appendix 1) with these additional elements now included.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Approve the updated Members' Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy document at Appendix 1.

Main Report

Background

1. In July 2023, Civic Affairs Sub-Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk relating to a Members' Bedroom Policy and revisions to the booking terms, eligibility criteria, rules and pricing and put forward a recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee thereon. This had been in response to a number of queries that had previously been raised by Members seeking clarity regarding various aspects of the policy.
2. It was agreed that the existing policy remained largely appropriate, but with a number of areas having been highlighted as requiring further consideration and revision.
3. Issues previously raised related to providing clarity around official and non-official usage, the eligibility criteria and those permitted to stay in the bedrooms e.g., Masters and Livery clerks and with the potential of bedrooms only being made available to external guests during a period of low usage.
4. An appropriate level of charges to be applied to the bedrooms had also been part of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee's consideration of the Members' Bedroom Policy and their recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee. Prior to Policy and Resources Committee's consideration of the item, a number of concerns had been raised regarding the level of increase to the bedroom charges proposed, the impacts that would result from the proposed increase in charges in allowing Members to be able to fully carry out their roles as elected Members, along with social mobility and equality impacts it presented. Policy and Resources Committee agreed to withdraw the item from the agenda.
5. The withdrawal of this item has resulted in a number of routine and straightforward administrative and procedural changes that had been put forward for inclusion in an updated policy having since fallen away and not having been implemented. This report is seeking Policy and Resources Committee's approval

of an updated Members' Bedroom Booking Terms and Eligibility Policy (Appendix 1).

Current Position

6. The Bedroom Rules and Eligibility criteria have not been changed since a review that was undertaken in 2014. It is now deemed appropriate to consider issues relating to appropriate use of the bedrooms, including official and non-official usage, an approved list of users, the booking procedure, dealing with complaints, misuse and outstanding invoices.

Official / Non-Official usage

7. Members had previously been mindful of a need to ensure appropriate usage criteria was being applied to all bookings and with the criteria around official and non-official usage needing to be clear.
8. There is currently no charge levied for overnight accommodation where the stay is deemed to be for official business. The following criteria is currently being applied for 'official usage' and 'non-official usage'.
 - *No charge will be levied for 'official usage' where –*
 - a) *A Member needs to attend early (i.e., before 8:30 am) official City Corporation engagements such as Market visits.*
 - b) *A Member is representing the City Corporation at an official event (e.g., a Party Conference) which finishes late at night, i.e., 10:30pm or later.*
 - c) *A Member is hosting or speaking at an early morning event and therefore needs to be certain of being on time.*
 - d) *A Member is hosting a dinner or speaking on behalf of the City Corporation at a major evening event.*
 - *Members will be charged for 'non-official usage' when they use the accommodation as detailed below:*
 - a) *When attending morning discussion meetings – but are not hosting or speaking.*
 - b) *When attending Banquets and dinners unless hosting/chairing a reception committee.*
 - c) *When attending social events e.g., concerts at the Barbican.*
 - d) *When attending Ward Club or Livery events unless they have a speaking role and are representing the Corporation.*
9. The existing criteria around 'official' and 'non-official' usage is deemed to remain appropriate as it is currently set out, but with there being recognition of a need to ensure the usage category is being made clear at the time of booking and applied accordingly.

10. Providing clarity regarding the booking procedure is proposed for inclusion within the Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy whereby a Member will be required to complete a light touch booking form at the time of their booking clearly detailing their name, purpose of booking e.g., 'Official Use' or 'Non-official Use' and indicating how the stay would constitute 'official usage', if this is the case. No room booking will be allowed without a booking form being completed and confirmation of usage being provided at the time of booking.
11. This will provide sufficient information to the Attendant to assess each booking request to ensure it is in line with the agreed Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy. Where a Member refuses to provide usage information at the time of their booking, the Attendant must clearly state that a booking will not be allowed without providing this information. Any issue that may arise as a result of this, can be referred to the Chief Commoner, Chair of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee and Town Clerk for their further consideration and review.

Approved list of users

12. In addition to Members, there is a list of non-Members who are identified as approved users and so are entitled to use the bedrooms, viz: -
 - Past Lord Mayors
 - Past Chief Commoners
 - Past Members who have served for a minimum of 8 years on the Court of Common Council
 - Senior Officers of the City Corporation and others who are detained on City Corporation related business
 - Senior CoL Police Officers (identified as the Chief Officer Team)
 - Masters of Livery Companies (for the period they are in office)
 - Clerks (currently in office) of Livery Companies
 - Immediate Past Masters of Livery Companies (when deputising for the Master)
 - The Honourable The Irish Society
 - Members' Guests
13. Members had previously questioned the eligibility criteria and those being permitted to stay in the bedrooms e.g., Masters and Livery Clerks and any impact this was having on availability of the bedrooms for Members' usage. It had been suggested that bedrooms might only be made available to certain external guests during periods of low usage.
14. Having reviewed occupancy levels, this has shown that the bedrooms are very rarely at full occupancy levels; also, the Bedroom Rules and Eligibility make it quite clear that priority is to be given to Members at all times over any Officers, non-Members or external guests.

15. Usage data has shown that the bedrooms are primarily used by Members and Officers, with very few external users. Use of the bedrooms by external users does not appear to be an issue that requires addressing; if anything, there would appear to be the potential to look at expanding usage of the bedrooms, but this is not being proposed at this point and it is recommended leaving the usage criteria and list of approved users as it currently stands.

Booking Procedure and Usage

16. An issue that several Members had previously queried was “block bookings” and for how long an individual Member is able to book a room and stay.

17. Members had previously indicated a desire to stop block bookings for extended stays, with there being a restriction placed on the maximum stay a Member would be able to book at any one time and there being a maximum number of ‘non-official usage’ overnight stays allowed during a calendar month.

18. It is therefore proposed that at the time of booking a maximum of two consecutive overnight stays be permitted at any one time, other than where the stay is for ‘Official Use’, with there also being a maximum of up to six weekday overnight stays for ‘Non-official Use’ being allowed during a calendar month. Block bookings will not be permitted as standard, with Members only being able to book a bedroom for a maximum of two consecutive days, other than where an overnight stay is needed for ‘Official Use’ and with this needing to be clearly detailed as part of the booking process.

19. Where a Member books multiple rooms for the same time and date, the first room will be charged at the Member rate with all other rooms being charged at the Non-Member rate.

20. It is recognised that there may on occasions be exceptional circumstances in which to allow a booking outside of the rules set out within the Members’ Bedrooms Booking Terms and Eligibility Policy. It is proposed that any such requests shall be referred to the Chair of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee, Chief Commoner and Town Clerk who will make a final determination on whether to allow the booking and an appropriate charge relating to usage. There will be no right of appeal of the decision reached.

Complaints, behaviour and misuse

21. The policy includes provision regarding behaviour confirming that *“those using the rooms must not use them in a way that could potentially cause embarrassment to the City of London Corporation, create a nuisance or misuse the facilities provided and always leave the bedroom in a respectful condition.”*

22. There is, however, no detail specified as to what this might constitute in practice, nor any indication as to who might make an assessment as to whether this provision has been breached, and what penalties might be imposed. Similarly,

the policy is silent on the question of payment and at what point outstanding invoices should preclude further bookings.

23. It would seem prudent to consider making provision for such a situation to ensure common understanding of process, in the event it is needed. The absence of any articulated process can make it challenging for the Chief Commoner of the day and relevant officers; users may have legitimate complaints and yet there is no process by which they might clearly be raised, escalated, and managed.
24. It is proposed that any allegation of misuse will be reported to the Chair of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee, Chief Commoner and Town Clerk who will make a determination over any claim of misuse and decide on an appropriate course of action. A proposed course of action may include, but not be limited to, suspension of use of the bedrooms for such a period as they see fit. There will be no right of appeal of the decision reached.

Outstanding invoices

25. In the event that invoices remain unsettled for a period exceeding two quarterly periods, it is proposed that no further bookings will be allowed from the Member in question; the Member will be prohibited from making any further bookings until the debt is cleared.
26. In the event of any dispute over outstanding payment of invoices, it is proposed that these be referred to the Chair of Civic Affairs Sub-Committee, Chief Commoner and Town Clerk who will make a determination. There will be no right of appeal of the decision reached.

Communications Plan

27. It is proposed that changes be implemented by 20th March 2025. This will allow for the updated policy to be clearly communicated to all new and returning Members following the all-out City-wide elections being held in March 2025.
28. To ensure these changes are communicated widely to all Members, a range of communications will be provided including a notice being placed in the Members' Briefing, reference to the changes being included in the Chief Commoner's monthly note out to all Members, Town Clerk to provide all new and returning Members with an updated copy of the Members' Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy document and with it also being provided to all Members as standard as part of the booking process.

Proposals

29. Members are being asked to consider and endorse the range of areas presented in this report relating to the Members' bedroom eligibility booking criteria, terms of usage and approve changes for inclusion in an updated Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy document.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – Members are provided with a level of access to bedrooms that is necessary to allow them to undertake their range of duties as elected Members working in support of the six outcomes in the Corporate Plan and the overall strategic direction of the City Corporation.

Financial implications – None.

Resource implications - There will be no additional resourcing implications, with bedroom bookings and management of these maintained through existing resources.

Legal implications – none.

Risk implications – none.

Equalities implications – An accessible room has been designed for disabled guests, allowing wheelchair access and accessibility for all.

Climate implications - Guildhall is part of the City Corporation's Operational Property Estate and operates in accordance with a number of workstreams as part of the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy.

Security implications – None

Conclusion

30. Members are being asked to consider and approve changes to the Members' Bedroom Rules and Eligibility Policy for inclusion in an updated document for implementation by 20th March 2025.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Updated Members' Bedrooms Booking Terms and Eligibility Policy

Background Papers

Members Bedroom Policy Report (Civic Affairs Sub-Committee 25/10/2023 / Policy and Resources Committee 16/11/2023)

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