

City of London Corporation Committee Report

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| Committee(s): Policy and Resources Committee – For decision | Dated: 13 February 2025 |
| Subject: Standing Order Review 2025 – Sub-Committees | Public report: For Decision |
| This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides statutory duties• provides business enabling functions | Corporate Governance |
| 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: The Town Clerk and Chief Executive | Ian Thomas CBE |
| Report author: The Assistant Town Clerk and Executive Director of Governance and Member Services | Polly Dunn |

Summary

In January 2025, this Committee supported a series of amendments to Standing Orders which are due to be considered by the Court of Common Council in March 2025.

To supplement the changes already going forward, the Committee sought detailed options on how the process of Members’ appointments to Sub-Committees might be streamlined, with the ambition of making more efficient use of the Committee’s time at its first meeting of the Civic Year.

This report sets out the various options available to the Committee and seeks the Committee’s steer on the preferred procedure. Delegated authority is then sought to ensure that the the necessary Standing Order changes can be incorporated to proposals going to the Court of Common Council in March 2025.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- 1) Note Appendix 1, which sets out the proposed process for the appointment of sub-committees, reflecting the Standing Order revisions as agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee in January 2025;
- 2) Consider the options for the process and administration for the appointment of Members to Sub-Committees as set out within the report; and

- 3) Agree a preferred process, delegating authority to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to finalise any necessary changes to the Standing Orders to facilitate this process, for onward recommendation by the Court of Common Council.

Main Report

Background

1. The Court of Common Council's Standing Orders should be reviewed regularly. In July 2024, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to a review with a defined scope (available in the background report), with the intention of ensuring that changes were made and implemented in time for the April 2025, the first meeting after the all-out Common Councillor elections.
2. In broad terms, the scope for the Standing Order review focussed on the Standing Orders relating to the conduct of business at meetings of the Court, its Committees ('Grand' Committees) and their Sub-Committees.
3. The term 'Grand Committee' applies to all committees directly appointed by the Court of Common Council. E.g., the City of London Police Authority Board (COLPAB) is a Grand Committee. The term 'Sub-Committee' refers to any sub-group of a Grand Committee. E.g. the Professional Standards and Integrity Committee is a Sub-Committee of COLPAB.
4. Amendments to the Standing Orders were considered by the Committee at its meeting in January 2025 and, following debate and some amendments, are due to be presented to the Court of Common Council for adoption in March 2025.
5. One area proposed for change concerns the mechanism by which the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of Sub-Committees are to be elected. As part of the Committee's deliberations, it agreed that the process should be changed from the current arrangement whereby the Chair of the Grand Committee nominates their preferred candidate. The new process (set out at Appendix 1) would result in the requirement to hold an additional ballot at the relevant Grand Committee in the event of a contest.
6. Whilst Members were supportive of this change, there were concerns that this process would add additional administration to an already lengthy process of the appointment of Sub-Committees. The Committee consequently commissioned the Town Clerk to bring back options on how this process might be streamlined.

Current Position

7. The process for the appointment of Sub-Committees, including the election of their Chairs and Deputy Chairs, as supported by Policy and Resources in January 2025, is set out in the form of a flow diagram at Appendix 1. Currently, Step 3, 4, 5 and 6 needs to be repeated in full for each Sub-Committee.

Options

8. There are many options available to Members to help expedite this process, these are summarised in the table, below.

| Option | Description | Implications |
|--------|---|---|
| 1 | No change | <p>The process for the appointment of Sub-Committees may take slightly longer, particularly for those Grand Committees with a large number of Sub-Committees.</p> <p>Members would retain the ability to nominate themselves to the Sub-Committee at the meeting of the Grand Committee.</p> <p>No change to staff resourcing required.</p> |
| 2 | Deadline for nominations for both the membership and Chairship of the Sub-Committee | <p>If a deadline for nominations was introduced (e.g. 12noon one working day before the meeting), Members would simply be given the opportunity to withdraw, after which all ballot papers (as per Step 3 and 4, Appendix 1) could be returned <i>en masse</i>. Members could continue with other items on their agenda before returning to the matter of the appointment of Chairs to the Sub-Committee(s). Step 5, Appendix 1, would not be required.</p> <p>This would reduce the time spent on the item considerably, but would prevent a Member from nominating themselves on the day, at the meeting.</p> <p>This would have negligible impact on staff resourcing.</p> |
| 3 | Indicative vote ahead of the meeting – to be ratified at Committee | <p>Ahead of the first meeting of the Grand Committee, the Town Clerk could conduct an indicative vote, which is subsequently ratified at the formal meeting.</p> <p>Challenges include the fact that ex-officio membership of a Committee can change in the days immediately leading up to a meeting. There is a real risk that votes of these individuals may not be captured properly.</p> <p>Nominations would have to be in much further in advance (two weeks rather than one day). This may not be palatable to Members.</p> <p>Members may challenge the process at Committee if, for example, they missed the relevant communications. At which point the Grand</p> |

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| | | <p>Committee could refuse the indicative vote and would have to run the ballot process as set out in Steps 3 – 6 in Appendix 1, anyway.</p> <p>This proposal would have a more significant impact on staff resourcing.</p> |
| 4 | Delegated Authority issued – with indicative vote to be taken after the meeting | <p>Delegated Authority issued at the first meeting, allowing an indicative ballot to be conducted by the Town Clerk, with the results to be ratified by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman after the meeting. This was the process successfully deployed during the early stages of Covid-19, when it was still not possible to conduct meetings virtually.</p> <p>Unless a deadline for nominations is implemented, there will still need to be time spent at the Committee, to settle the final list of nominees.</p> <p>The outcome of the ballots will not be known for one-two weeks after the first meeting of the relevant Grand Committee.</p> <p>A subsequent ballot would need to then be conducted for the appointment of the Sub-Committee Chairman.</p> <p>This proposal will require some additional staff resource and would generate the requirement for up to 13 additional delegated authorities to be processed.</p> |

Proposals

9. All options 1-4 are feasible and Members are encouraged to share their views on what they believe is the most appropriate on behalf of all Grand Committees.
10. On balance, Option 2 appears to be the least complex option. It would present reasonable efficiencies at Committee, whilst posing minimal administrative burden on both Members and Officers. It is, however, for Members to decide whether or not they believe that the introduction of a deadline for Sub-Committee nominations, is reasonable.
11. If Option 2 is supported, Members may wish for provision to be made within the Standing Orders, to allow for nominations at the Grand Committee, in the event that fewer nominations are received by the deadline, than there are vacancies. Again, for consistency, Members may wish to consider imposing a deadline for the nomination of Deputy Chair of the Sub-Committee.

Key Data

12. Members may wish to consider whether a change is required, based on key data.
13. Of the 30 Grand Committees of the Court of Common Council, 17 do not have any direct oversight over any formal Sub-Committees. Of the remaining 13, Policy and Resources Committee has the most Sub-Committees (six). The others have between one and four Sub-Committees, each.
14. At its meeting in May 2024, the Policy and Resources Committee spent approximately 23 minutes on the appointment of Members to Sub-Committees, including the appointment of their respective Chairs and Deputy Chairs.

Strategic implications – This review seeks to introduce revisions to the City’s Standing Orders, to provide efficiencies in the running of Court and Committee meetings; and improve transparency. As proposed, it is hoped that the amendments will help “Build on Brilliant Basics” and the provision of statutory duties to deliver for people; contributing to civic life both in the City and further afield; and delivering social mobility for all.

Financial implications – There are no direct financial implications in relation to this report.

Resource implications – Resource implications, where applicable, are set out within the options.

Legal implications – There is reasonable discretion for the Court of Common Council to determine an appropriate mechanism by which its Committees, Sub-Committees, Chairs and Deputy Chairs are to be appointed.

Risk implications – There are no considerable risks associated with proposals. However, if amendments are proposed without notice, it may not be possible to fully inform Members of the wider implications of such a change. Late proposals could then have to unintended consequences.

Equalities implications – Under the Equality Act 2010, all public bodies have a duty to ensure that when exercising their functions they have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and to take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people and encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. The proposals contained in this report do not have any potential negative impact on a particular group of people based on their protected characteristics.

Climate implications – none.

Security implications – none.

Conclusion

15. There are multiple options for Members to consider in relation to the process of electing the membership of Sub-Committees, and consequently the election of the Sub-Committee Chairs. Subject to Members views this day, the Town Clerk is seeking delegated authority (in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman) to draw up the necessary draft Standing Orders, to give rise to the

preferred option. This proposal will then go to the Court of Common Council in March 2025, alongside the previously agreed Standing Order Revisions from January 2025.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Process for appointing Sub-Committees and Sub-Committee Chairs, as agreed by Policy and Resources Committee in January 2025

Background Papers

[Standing Order Review – Policy and Resources Committee \(July 2024\)](#)

[Standing Orders Review – Policy and Resources Committee \(January 2025\)](#)

Polly Dunn

Assistant Town Clerk and Executive Director of Governance and Member Services

Appendix 1: Process for appointing Sub-Committees and Sub-Committee Chairs, as agreed by Policy and Resources Committee in January 2025

STEP 1

Summons/Agenda of the Grand Committee meeting is issued five clear working days in advance by the Town Clerk to all its Members and (where the Summons is issued before the first Court of Common Council meeting of the Civic Year) to any candidates standing for election to the Grand Committee.

Along with the Summons, the Town Clerk will seek expressions of interest for any Sub-Committee vacancies. Expressions of interest for vacancies on sub-committees can be submitted up to and at the meeting of the Committee responsible for appointing to said vacancy/ies. The Town Clerk will also seek nominations for those who wish to stand for Chair of any Sub-Committees for which the Grand Committee is responsible for appointing.

STEP 2

The Town Clerk will circulate any expressions of interest (be that for membership of a Sub-Committee or the Chairship of a Sub-Committee) received in advance of the meeting.

STEP 3

At the meeting of the Committee, when the relevant item is reached and once the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committees has been confirmed, the Town Clerk will commence the appointment process. This will be done for each sub-committee, in turn. It involves confirming the number of vacancies, reading out the names of those who expressed an interest in advance of the meeting, asking if any other Member wishes to put their name forward, and if any Member wishes to withdraw.

STEP 4

If the number of nominees does not exceed the total number of vacancies, those in nomination will be appointed directly to the Sub-Committee.

OR

If the number of nominees does exceed the total number of vacancies, the Town Clerk will conduct a ballot which is then issued to the Committee for immediate completion.

The ballot will be conducted and results announced.

STEP 5

The Town Clerk will then announce, of those successfully appointed to the Sub-Committee, who has nominated themselves as Chair. They will then ask if any of the other successfully appointed Members, wish to stand as Chair of the Sub-Committee.

STEP 6

If no one wishes to nominate themselves, the Chair of the Grand Committee will assume the role until the next meeting.

OR

If there is one nominee, they will be announced as being duly appointed for the year ensuing.

OR

If there are multiple nominees, the Town Clerk will conduct a ballot which will be issued to the Committee for immediate completion.

The ballot will be conducted and the results announced.

NB

The Deputy Chair of the Sub-Committee is to be elected by the Sub-Committee, from the entirety of the Sub-Committee's membership, at its first meeting.