

Committee(s): General Purposes Committee of Aldermen	Dated: 04 March 2025
Subject: Court of Aldermen Governance Documents: Review	Public
This proposal: · provides business enabling functions	Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N/A
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Gemma Stokley, Town Clerk's Department	

Summary

At various recent meetings of the General Purposes Committee, comments have been made relating to the potential for improved oversight and joined-up thinking on various Aldermanic 'governance' documents and the need to keep these under regular review.

The Court of Aldermen's Terms of Reference have not been reviewed for some time. They were last considered by this Committee in March 2021, almost 4 years ago, where following a review by the Comptroller and City Solicitor's department several revisions were proposed to better reflect the remit of the Court of Aldermen in respect of its charitable activities.

In addition to the Terms of Reference, it would also seem opportune to now review other relevant governance documents such as the Aldermanic Undertakings, Aldermanic Job Description, Aldermanic Sheriff Job Description and Lord Mayor Job Description in order to ensure consistency of approach and messaging across the board.

In keeping with general good practice applied across the organisation, Aldermen are now asked to review their existing Terms of Reference to determine whether they are of the view that they still adequately reflect the purpose and remit of the Court of Aldermen. In keeping with this, and for reasons of good governance, it is also suggested that other relevant governance documents relating to the work of the Court of Aldermen - namely the Aldermanic Undertakings, Individual Alderman's Job Description, Aldermanic Sheriff Job Description and Lord Mayor's Job Description are reviewed alongside this to address any potential inconsistencies.

All of the relevant, existing documents for review are attached as appendices to the report.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to agree that:

1. The terms of reference of the Court of Aldermen and other relevant Aldermanic governance documents (**set out as appendices to this report**) be reviewed to ensure that any inconsistencies of approach are addressed;
2. Should any amendments be required, Delegated Authority be granted to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the General Purposes Committee, to consider the final wording of the revised Terms of Reference and other relevant governance documentation, with a recommendation thereon submitted to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.

Main Report

Background

1. The Court of Aldermen is itself one of the constituent sovereign bodies of The Corporation of London and in that capacity has the power to regulate itself and the conduct of its meetings and subcommittees.
2. When looking at the organisation's wider governance context, all Committees of the Court of Common Council undertake an annual review of their Terms of Reference ahead of each new civic year, in time for the annual reappointment of Committees by the Court of Common Council each April. Typically, this annual review process provides an opportunity for Officers and Members to suggest any administrative amendments (such as the updates of names of any Departments, or Committees) alongside any more substantial revisions that are considered necessary to facilitate strategic change and the efficient transaction of business.
3. Given its narrower range of responsibilities and significantly smaller number of committees, this exercise has not historically been adopted by the Court of Aldermen and that body's existing Terms of Reference have not been formally reviewed since March 2021. It has, therefore, been suggested that in keeping with good governance practices elsewhere, it may be prudent to undertake a similar annual review ahead of each new civic year.
4. In addition to this, Officers are conscious that there are other, related governance documents which exist and which relate directly to these ToRs (for instance, the Aldermanic Undertaking, Aldermanic Job Description and Lord Mayor's Job Description) which might also benefit from more regular review and in the interests of ensuring a more joined-up approach across the suite of relevant documentation. The views of the Committee on these documents are sought today alongside permission for delegated authority for the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair and other relevant stakeholders to review these and return to Committee with formal recommendations thereon.

Current Position

5. The current Terms of Reference for the Court of Aldermen are set out at Appendix 1 to this report. This document is also publicly available on the City Corporation's 'Corporate Governance' webpages.
6. The Court of Aldermen's Terms of Reference differ from others in that, as well as setting out the main areas of activity/remit of the Court, they also lead with a sub-section on 'responsibilities' which essentially underpin the work of the Court of Aldermen both collectively and individually. The text here has a clear link to the Aldermanic Undertakings but also to the Aldermanic Job Description and arguably, beyond this, the Lord Mayor and Aldermanic Sheriff Job Descriptions. Whilst no immediate changes to the various documents are necessarily proposed by Officers at this stage, Aldermen are invited to consider whether, for completeness and consistency, they feel that they might helpfully be reviewed with firm proposals on each returning to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.
7. Ensuring consistency across these various documents and that they are subject to more regular review going forward will provide a suite of information that is up to date and readily available for the purposes of future Aldermanic candidates but also for wider stakeholders, both internal and external, to better and more consistently articulate the role of Alderman and the responsibilities it carries. This is an objective that cuts across the work and priorities of all three Aldermanic Strategy Groups. It would also be beneficial to make reference, in this respect, to the 'Court of Aldermen 2024/25' publication, now available here: [Court of alderman 2024/25](#) to ensure that any proposed revisions to all other governance documents are also consistent with the messaging here.
8. Members are asked to review the Court of Aldermen's Terms of Reference document alongside the Aldermanic Undertakings and consider any revisions required at this time to ensure that these documents remain relevant and fit for purpose. Once agreed, the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen shall thereafter make recommendations to the Court of Aldermen for approval.
9. Caution should be exercised in attempting to draft and agree wording in the meeting; it is therefore recommended that, should changes be required, Officers be instructed to draft any proposed amendments and seek the necessary approval of these under delegated authority in advance of their submission to a subsequent meeting of the Court of Aldermen.
10. Subject to Members' final determinations, both documents will be finalised and incorporated into the Aldermanic induction materials to provide greater clarity and oversight to all, including new incumbents moving forwards.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

- **Strategic implications** – Sharing and regularly reviewing the documentation attached, intended to provide all with greater mutual understanding of the rules and requirements of the role of Aldermen, Sheriff and Lord Mayor will assist those holding these positions in better discharging their electoral and Ward duties.
- **Financial implications** – None.

- **Resource implications** – There will be some modest resource implications associated with regularly reviewing existing documentation and presenting these to the wider Court for adoption, however, these are minimal and simply reflect good practice which can be absorbed within existing arrangements.
- **Legal implications** – In considering the matter the Committee may wish to consider the accuracy of the title “terms of reference” which does not appear to accurately reflect the Court of Alderman’s historic status as one of the decision making bodies of the Corporation and the source of its powers.
- **Risk implications** – The risks associated with these proposals are low, given that they simply seek to provide improved guidance and support to existing arrangements. Failure to react to the perceived current issues may, however, lead to a risk of continued lack of clarity.
- **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** - The proposals included in this paper do not carry any significant implications for the Climate Action programme.
- **Security implications** – None

Conclusion

11. It is recommended that the General Purposes Committee of Aldermen consider the Court of Aldermen’s Terms of Reference and other relevant governance documents and decide whether these accurately reflect the nature of its work and its various functions and duties working in support of the overall aims of the City Corporation.
12. Should it be felt that revisions are necessary, we ask that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair, Deputy Chair and other relevant stakeholders to pursue this further and return to Committee with further recommendations thereon.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference for the Court of Aldermen (Terms of Reference as agreed by the Court of Aldermen in March 2021)
- Appendix 2 – The Undertakings
- Appendix 3 – Job Description for individual Aldermen
- Appendix 4 – Aldermanic Sheriff Job Description
- Appendix 5 – Lord Mayor Job Description