

City of London Blue Plaques Panel – Terms of Reference 2026/27

Membership Table

TBC

1. Purpose

The City of London Blue Plaques Panel is established to assess, shortlist, and recommend applications for the installation of commemorative blue plaques within the City of London; to agree yearly themes as appropriate and to report on equity, diversity, and inclusion in relation to the conduct of its business. The Panel ensures that decisions by Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee (CHL) are made transparently and equitably.

Since 1879, the City of London Corporation has had the responsibility of erecting plaques within its boundaries to recognise its jurisdictional independence.

2. Aims of the Scheme

To celebrate and commemorate remarkable historic people, buildings, institutions and events within the City of London, in an inclusive and transparent way.

3. Governance and Reporting

- 3.1. The panel is officer-led, with CHL representation, and ability to allow for both internal and external membership. The panel makes recommendations to the CHL committee for decision. The panel itself does not have any decision-making powers.
- 3.2. The panel will provide an annual update to the Equity, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EEDI) sub-committee on the annual applications received, highlighting the scheme's progress in diversification, identifying areas for improvement for the following year, and reviewing best practices and opportunities.
- 3.3. The Heritage Estate Section (HES) within City Surveyor's administers the City of London Blue Plaques scheme, supports applications and ensures compliance with the City Corporation policies and governance.

4. Membership

4.1. The panel will comprise City Corporation officers, Members and stakeholders with established expertise in history, heritage and culture.

4.2. Membership structure:

Chair: Senior Heritage Estate officer (HES)

Deputy Chair (Supporting Officer): Culture Team officer

2x CHL Members: Chair/Deputy and CHL Member

4x subject matter experts (internal or external) with expertise in one of the following areas:

- History (with a focus on City of London)
- Culture/Arts
- Planning/Heritage/EEDI

Total number of members: 8

Observers or advisors may be invited to attend meetings or consulted as required.

5. Term of Appointment

5.1. The Chair shall remain in position for four years renewable up to a maximum of eight years.

5.2. Remaining members are selected by Expressions of Interest and appointed for a period of four years which shall be renewable up to a maximum term of eight years.

5.3. The CHL Member will be selected by Expressions of Interest for a decision to be made by the CHL Chair.

5.4. Succession planning will be embedded to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer.

5.5. A person ceases to be a panel member if they: resign; or fail to comply with these terms of reference.

5.6. Members may resign by giving written notification to the Chair.

6. Conduct and Disclosures

6.1. Panel members must act professionally with impartiality, respect, and integrity.

- 6.2. Panel members should perform the role as described and attend the meetings.
- 6.3. Panel members are expected to review applications in advance of each meeting.
- 6.4. If panel members cannot attend a meeting, they are expected to advise the Chair and to send any relevant comments in advance.
- 6.5. Panel membership shall be published on the City of London Blue Plaques webpage.
- 6.6. Panel members should declare a conflict of interest at the beginning of a meeting. The Chair will decide if the member should exit the relevant part of the meeting and/or abstain from discussion and recommendation.

7. Meeting Procedures

- 7.1. The panel will meet at least twice per year, with additional meetings convened as necessary.
- 7.2. Meetings will be scheduled to align with the annual application cycle and CHL Committee reporting deadlines.
- 7.3. Applications reports will be circulated within a month of the meeting.
- 7.4. Agendas will be sent at least one week prior to meetings

8. Decision-Making

The minimum number of members present for a recommendation shall consist of at least 3 members, including the Chair. Recommendations will be made by the majority vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair will have the casting vote.

9. Panel Responsibilities

- a) Provide knowledge and expertise on City of London Blue Plaques and advise Members, officers and external agencies as appropriate.
- b) Review and assess applications against criteria and guidance and make recommendations on whether an application should be approved or rejected to the Culture Heritage and Libraries Committee.
- c) Recommend applications eligible for City Corporation funding and, subject to availability, one corporate sponsorship funded.
- d) Recommend adjustments to wording and location of plaques as appropriate.
- e) Ensure decisions reflect the City Corporation's commitment to equity, diversity, historical accuracy, and public interest.

- f) Submit recommendations for approval to the CHL Committee.
- g) Assess applications involving references to contested heritage, based on the guidance here provided.
- h) If there is uncertainty regarding applications involving references to contested heritage, these should be submitted to the CHL Committee for review and determination.
- i) Submit full list of yearly applications and updates for information to the CHL Committee.
- j) Submit an annual update report to EEDI Sub-Committee.
- k) In consultation with the CHL Chair and Deputy Chair, agree yearly themes and their programming with the aim of promoting diversity, inclusion, and representation in commemorative selections and in consideration to the overall balance of the existing offer.
- l) Provide suggestions regarding the long-term sustainability and public engagement of the City of London Blue Plaques Scheme.
- m) Provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants via HES, including reapplication guidance.
- n) Maintain transparency throughout the process.
- o) Contribute to the development and refinement of selection criteria and application processes if required.
- p) Maintain a record of decisions for archival purposes.

10. Eligibility Criteria

- a) Eligible subjects: notable historic people, buildings, institutions, or events with clear and direct association with the Square Mile and substantial significance to its historical narrative.
- b) Proposed people must have been dead for at least 20 years, and they must have made a significant, lasting and positive contribution in fields such as archaeology, architecture, arts, culture, politics, science, society, social reform, community service, human welfare or happiness.
- c) A person's time in the City should have been significant (more than two years) or important within their life and work. If less than two years, evaluation will be stricter and at the panel's discretion.
- d) Commemorations for multiple people or groups on one plaque are acceptable.
- e) The subject should not be discredited for reasons that would make commemoration inappropriate.
- f) The subject must be of interest in areas such as archaeology, architecture, politics, society, science, arts, culture, humanitarianism, or history.

- g) Applications for a subject already celebrated elsewhere in the Square Mile or Greater London will only be considered at panel discretion.
- h) Foreign Applications (for foreign-born individuals that did not reside in the UK) must have international reputation. Names on plaques should follow standard English references or be easily recognisable in English.
- i) Commemorations remain valid even if the original building no longer exists.

Exclusions:

- a) No more than two plaques are allowed on one building or structure.
- b) Animals, plants, objects and fictional characters or events will not be considered.
- c) Plaques shall not be erected to commemorate short-term associations or stays.

11. Selection Criteria and Scoring

- a) Applications must meet all eligibility criteria to proceed to assessment.
- b) The City of London Corporation reserves the right to determine priorities among the subjects suggested.
- c) The subject of commemoration is encouraged to highlight broader stories, including those of women, Global Majority groups, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people or people from disadvantage backgrounds.
- d) The Panel will consider representation and overall case balance in their decision based on the data on existing offer of plaques.
- e) Applications may be rejected for various reasons, such as when the subject's significance is not clearly demonstrated, or the quality of the application is considered insufficient.
- f) For City of London Corporation funded applications, preference will be given to applications that fit within the yearly theme.
- g) To assist with decision making, a scoring criterion will be used for shortlisting, based on relevance and overall balance.

12. General Conditions:

- a) The City Corporation only offers a ceramic wall plaque and does not accept pavement mounted plaques nor brass, metal or polymer based plates.

- b) The plaque is a clay tablet, finished to a standard design, either surface mounted or recessed into the surrounding building material.
- c) The plaque's design and wording must follow the standard style and format.
- d) Accessibility: the plaque should be visible from a public road or place and be at a height of less than 2.5 meters from the ground level.
- e) If an application is refused, it can re-apply the following year. This timeframe may be revisited, if necessary.
- f) Self-funded applications will not be eligible for CoL-funding.

13. Themes

While all eligible subjects are encouraged and will be considered as part of the assessment process, new annual themes will be introduced to promote underrepresented groups, such as women, Global Majority groups, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, plus (LGBTQ+) groups, etc. The panel will set each year's theme based on overall balance and existing available data.

- Significant people in the following sub-categories:
 - Global Majority groups. Global Majority refers to individuals who are Arab, Asian/Asian British (and all categories within) Black/Black British (and all categories within), Latin American, Mixed or multiple ethnicities (and all categories within).
 - LGBTQ+ people
 - Women
 - Disabled people
 - Unsung heroes, or people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Time periods i.e. 20th century or 1960-80s
- Stories: commerce, activism, migration
- Subjects: Music, Arts, Science, etc
- Faith

Themes should be promoted by City Corporation marketing and social media campaigns and associated teams. Engagement is to be provided by others.

14. Guidance for Decision on Contested Heritage

Contested heritage definition: Historical figures, places or events whose legacy includes actions or associations now widely considered harmful, eg: slavery, genocide, severe discrimination, organised violence or extremism.

This guidance has been prepared for the blue plaques application process and applies to all blue plaque applications, review processes and related

communications. It covers cases where the person, place or event proposed for commemoration has documented associations which fall within the above definition.

For new applications with identified contested heritage associations the panel will:

- a) Make note of the nature of the contestation search.
- b) Assess risks to community cohesion, public trust and heritage values.
- c) Assess if the commemoration is appropriate by considering the scale, intentionality and weighing the potential harm against the significance and benefits of the contributions.
- d) Entrust decision-making to the CoL Blue Plaques Panel.
- e) If undecided, applications will be referred to CHL for decision.
- f) Where a plaque is allowed, and subject to resources, engage with relevant departments to facilitate community consultation with groups potentially harmed by the proposed subject, and for online supporting content.
- g) Where a plaque is allowed, keep inscriptions factual, neutral and minimal, and the recognised contribution.
- h) Appropriate safeguarding will be established for those undertaking research and or involved in decision-making, recognising the importance of well-being given the sensitivity of the topics at hand.

15. Review and Amendments

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed as required, or every 5 years, to reflect changes in governance, policy, or operational needs. Amendments will be made under Delegated Authority to the City Surveyor in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee, and the Chair of the City of London Blue Plaques Panel.

Appendix 1 – Responsibilities of the Chair & Supporting Officer

Chair's responsibilities are to:

- a) Chair City of London Blue Plaques Panel meetings and attend and present at CHL committee and EEDI sub-committee and associated call overs.
- b) Ensure the panel properly delivers its responsibilities and that blue plaque applications meet the criteria.
- c) Ensure the membership of the panel has the relevant expertise to review applications.
- d) Ensure the views of all panel members' are considered in the meetings.
- e) Ensure that all applications comply with CoL policies and processes.
- f) Agree agenda and meeting minutes.
- g) Agree committee reports for CHL and EEDI.
- h) Ensure confidentiality processes are followed.
- i) Adhere to Governance processes.

Deputy Chair / Supporting officer responsibilities are to:

- a) Act as the secretariat for City of London Blue Plaques Panel meetings, organising meeting dates and invitations, preparing agendas and writing meeting minutes.
- b) Replace the Chair when they are not available.
- c) Keep an overview of all applications to facilitate assessment.
- d) Supported by the Chair, to act as the point of contact for panel members, CoL Departments and Members on matters relating to the blue plaques panel's responsibilities.
- e) Ensure that agendas are published in advance of the meeting and that minutes are recorded and circulated to all panel members and other parties.
- f) Supported by the Chair draft committee and delegated reports for CHL committee and EEDI sub-committee.
- g) Attend CHL committee and EEDI sub-committee and associated call overs and record any actions or Member questions in relation to blue plaques that arise.
- h) Inform HES of final shortlisted applications. HES to inform and signpost the applicants to other required permissions and licenses and to support delivery.
- i) Ensure confidentiality processes are followed.