

<b>Committee(s):</b> General Purposes Committee of Aldermen – For decision	<b>Dated:</b> 3 February 2026
<b>Subject:</b> The Guildable Manor of Southwark	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Mr. Remembrancer	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> James Edwards, Remembrancer's Office	

### Summary

This report summarises the history and role of the Guildable Manor of Southwark and its relationship with the City of London Corporation.

### Recommendation

The General Purposes Committee of Aldermen is recommended to note the City of London Corporation's current relationship with the Guildable Manor of Southwark and to consider what its ongoing relationship should be.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The relationship between the City of London and the neighbouring settlement of Southwark was for many centuries characterised by the City of London's attempts to gain greater control over the area to its south.
2. Consequently, the City of London has – at varying times – exercised more or less jurisdiction over its neighbour, with charters granting rights over three manors of Southwark – the Guildable Manor, the King's Manor, and the Great Liberty – granted between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.
3. The City's jurisdiction over Southwark culminated in its incorporation as one of the City's wards – Bridge Without – in 1550.
4. While the City of London Corporation's jurisdiction over Southwark ended in the early twentieth century (though it was not until 1978 that Bridge Without was finally merged with the ward of Bridge Within), the City Corporation continues

to retain the vestigial right to hold Courts Leet for the three manors of Southwark, with Corporation officers, including the Recorder, appointed to ceremonial roles within the Borough.

### **The Southwark Courts Leet**

5. Courts Leet were historically courts of record, which could also try and punish crimes committed within their jurisdiction. In Southwark, they acted as an organ of local government, similar to the annual wardmotes held in the City's other wards.
6. The Corporation's right to hold a Court Leet for the Guildable Manor of Southwark (an area adjacent to London Bridge) was granted in a charter issued in 1444, while the right to hold Courts Leet in the King's Manor and the Great Liberty was granted in 1550.
7. As well as hearing and determining legal proceedings, Courts Leet were also the occasion for the election of a series of manorial officials, including the Ale-Taster, Constable and Flesh-Taster. All freeholders and residents were, in theory, required to attend, and could be fined for non-attendance.
8. With the development of modern local government, the Courts Leet lost their practical functions and by the mid-nineteenth century had ceased to elect the traditional manorial officers.
9. The elections were, however, revived for ceremonial purposes in 1953 and the right of the Courts Leet to appoint traditional officers and receive an address from the High Steward of the Southwark Manors were preserved in the Administration of Justice Act 1977, which otherwise removed from the Manors the right to hear and determine legal proceedings.
10. Today, these customary proceedings continue to take place annually, typically in November. The Court Leet is presided over by the High Steward of Southwark, an *ex officio* role of the Recorder of London, and one to which he is appointed by the Court of Aldermen at the same time as his appointment as Recorder. The jurors (members) of the Court Leet are summoned to attend by the High Bailiff of Southwark, formerly an *ex officio* role of the Secondary and Under Sheriff, and one currently filled by the Head of Operations at the Central Criminal Court. In this way, the historic links between the City of London and Southwark are maintained.
11. At the Court Leet, the Jurors and Officers of the Guildable Manor of Southwark are sworn in, the Riot Act is read by the High Bailiff, and the High Steward addresses the Court, usually on an historical matter. The Court Leet is followed by a lunch.

### **The Guildable Manor of Southwark**

12. The Guildable Manor of Southwark is the association of those called to attend the Southwark Court Leet. Membership, for which the Freedom of London is a

prerequisite, is gained on the recommendation of two proposers and via the payment of a membership fee.

13. As an organisation it is technically separate to the Court Leet, and likens its civic profile to that of a livery company – indeed, there is a degree of crossover in its membership with the livery and civic City, with former Lord Mayor Ian Luder and current Policy Chairman Christopher Hayward both having served as foreman of the Manor.
14. The Guildable Manor in its current form dates to the late 1990s, when its rules, constitution and annual programme of events were devised. Prior to this, arrangements for the Southwark Court Leet were made on a more informal basis, including through the Southwark Civic Association (now the Southwark Civic Society), whose patron was the Mayor of Southwark.
15. The Guildable Manor's objects are to promote good fellowship and the maintenance of the traditions of the City of London and the Guildable Manor of Southwark by arranging the Court Leet, a series of social events including talks and visits, and supporting charitable causes.
16. It appoints a series of officers to transact its business, namely a Foreman, Constable, Afeeror, Flesh Taster, Ale Taster, Ale Sizer and at least five 'tithingmen'. These roles are likened to the Master and Wardens of a livery company by the Guildable Manor.
17. As well as the Court Leet, the Guildable Manor also arranges an annual history lecture (titled the Bridge House-Yard Lecture), a thanksgiving service and Quit Rents ceremony (typically attended by the King's Remembrancer or representative, a representative from the Chamberlain's Court, and a lawyer from the City Remembrancer's office who for the purposes of the Quit Rents ceremony serves as Attorney to the City of London), and a legal lecture (the Justices and Jurors Lecture). These events, to which a number of City Corporation representatives are invited, are funded out of the membership fees and event fees put in place by the Guildable Manor.
18. In the last fifteen years, the legal lecture in particular has attracted a highly credible series of speakers, including in 2025 the President of the King's Bench Division, Dame Victoria Sharp, in 2023 the Chancellor of the High Court, Sir Julian Flaux, in 2019 the President of the Supreme Court, Baroness Hale, in 2012 the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Judge of Draycote, and in 2011 the Master of the Rolls Lord Neuberger.

### **Relationship with the City of London Corporation**

19. As noted above, the City of London Corporation's right to hold a Court Leet is separate to the association of those who are summoned to attend the Court Leet itself (i.e. the Guildable Manor). While the Recorder is *ex officio* the High Steward of Southwark and the Head of Operations at the Central Criminal Court is *ex officio* High Bailiff, these are offices of the Court Leet, not of the Guildable Manor.

20. There are no formal links between the City of London Corporation and the Guildable Manor of Southwark. While the Guildable Manor's constitution notes that its rules are subject to the approval of the Court of Aldermen of the City of London Corporation, the Court of Aldermen has never formally accepted oversight of the organisation (despite a request to do so in 2008).
21. Nonetheless, there is clearly a degree of participation by members of the City Corporation with events organised by the Guildable Manor of Southwark, which may be perceived as constituting a more formal relationship.

## **Conclusion**

22. Given the information above, including the right of the City Corporation to hold Courts Leet in relation to its Southwark manors and the role of the Guildable Manor of Southwark in organising a Court Leet on behalf of the Corporation, the Court of Aldermen is invited to consider what its ongoing relationship with the Guildable Manor of Southwark should be.

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