

Committee(s): Members' Privileges Sub-Committee	Date(s): 21 September 2017
Subject: Recognition of departing Members at Court of Common Council	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
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Summary

At its June 2017 meeting, the Members' Privileges Sub Committee discussed the process by which Members departing the Court of Common Council were thanked formally for their service. In particular, the Sub-Committee observed the distinction between the procedures for those standing down from the Court during their term, those not seeking re-election, and those who sought but were unsuccessful in achieving re-election to office.

This report sets out the current position, outlines changes made in recent years in an effort to ameliorate the position for those losing seats at elections in a suitable manner, and proposes options for Members' consideration with regard to potential amendments for future years.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the various options set out at paragraphs 13-18 and determine what approach should be taken in future years.

Main Report

Background

1. At each meeting of the Court of Common Council, a standing agenda item exists to provide facility for various resolutions to be moved. These include congratulatory resolutions (for instance, upon the award of an honour from Her Majesty the Queen), memorial resolutions (i.e. expressing the Court's sympathies in respect of a Member who has died in office), and resolutions on retirement.
2. This last category of resolution was the subject of some debate at the June 2017 meeting of the Members' Privileges Sub-Committee, with Members suggesting that thought should be given to an appropriate similar mechanism for Members who did not necessarily retire from the Court during their term, but either decided not to stand for re-election at the natural expiry point of the term, or were unsuccessful in being re-elected.

Current Position

3. Presently, the only departing Members in receipt of a formal retirement resolution are those Members who resign from the Court during their term, or die in office. On such occasions, a resolution is moved at the next available meeting of the Court in the usual manner (i.e. making reference to their various contributions, thanking them, and wishing them well in their retirement). A recent example of such a resolution is provided at Appendix A.
4. However, those who lose their seats at elections – or choose not to seek re-election upon the expiry of their terms – do not receive a formal resolution. Given the relatively late introduction of quadrennial City-wide elections, as well as the traditionally low level of turnover of membership until recent years, this has only recently emerged as an issue meriting consideration.
5. Ahead of the 2013 City-wide elections, it became apparent that a number of Members would not be seeking re-election. Wanting to recognise their contributions, the Chief Commoner of the day read a short note thanking those affected at the meeting of the Court immediately preceding the election. This did not take the form of a formal resolution of the Court, but more an informal mention of the individual Members' contributions.
6. Following the further changes to the Court's membership occurring as a consequence of those elections, the decision was also then taken to make a short reference to those who had been unsuccessful in achieving re-election. Consequently, the Chief Commoner made a brief statement at the April meeting of the Court, expressing a general thank you and listing the names of those who had been unsuccessful.
7. Ahead of the 2017 City-wide elections it was clear that, once again, a number of Members had determined not to seek re-election; it was also possible, given the number of contested Wards, that a further number of Members might be unsuccessful in achieving re-election.
8. There was a general sentiment that the contributions of each of these Members should be recognised in some way, with the inference being that a repeat of the very brief references made in 2013 would be unsatisfactory. However, concern was also expressed as to the possibility of a full resolution being made for each, given the time that this would take.
9. Some 13 Members not seeking re-election were mentioned at the March meeting, with a further 11 who were not re-elected mentioned at the April meeting. A formal resolution usually takes around two to three minutes to read, with several further minutes added on by the formal process of calling on the mover – who often adds a personal introduction – and then calling on the seconder, and putting it to the vote. It is clear then that moving formal resolutions would have equated to around an hour of additional time at each of the two Court meetings.
10. Consequently, a fuller, more personalised note was prepared for both meetings, to be delivered by the Chief Commoner. This consisted of a short

paragraph for each Member, noting their principal achievements and contributions. Whilst longer and more personal, these still did not constitute formal resolutions and the length was subsequently curtailed.

Issue

11. The discussions of the Sub-Committee at its June meeting would suggest that Members are still minded that the position is unsatisfactory, with further thought needed to striking the balance between recognising departing Members' contributions sufficiently whilst also not taking up too much of the Court's time.
12. Members are therefore invited to consider the various options set out below or suggest alternative improvements to the current process.

Options

13. *Cease formal resolutions and replace with an informal arrangement:* one way of removing any discrepancy would be to cease the practice of delivering formal resolutions on retirement, instead switching to a system similar to that currently in place around the election period – i.e. the Chief Commoner to say a few short words, but nothing overly lengthy or formal. This would achieve parity and ensure the Court's thanks were briefly recorded in the minutes, whilst also minimising the length of time allocated to such formalities at Court meetings.
14. *Introduce formal resolutions for all Members:* if Members would not wish to cease the practice of moving formal resolutions in the traditional fashion, they may wish to consider the introduction of individual resolutions for each departing Member. This would have the disadvantage of adding significant length to Court meetings, as well as requiring additional resource to produce.
15. *Introduce written resolutions for those Members not seeking re-election/unsuccessful in achieving re-election:* a potential half-way house could be to introduce written resolutions immediately preceding and after City-wide elections. These could be circulated as part of the Summons and the Motion simply be to agree with the several resolutions as set out. This would ensure that affected Members have a fuller and more formal thank you from the Court, whilst also minimising the amount of time taken at Court meetings. The terms of the resolutions would be agreed by the Ward Deputy as is current practice (or, in certain circumstances, the Alderman of the Ward). This option would, however, preclude the individual Member moving the Resolution from adding their own personal words of introduction.
16. *Continue with the current practice:* one option would be to continue with the current practice, whereby the Chief Commoner reads a short personalised paragraph about each of the Members either not standing for re-election or who have not been returned by the electorate.
17. *Cease Resolutions altogether:* this would mean that no recognition, whether formal or informal, would be given to Members leaving office. In lieu of this, an alternative option could be a letter of thanks from the Chief Commoner; however, this would mean that there would be no recognition at the Court of the Member's service.

18. *Limit formal Resolutions to Members with a minimum period of service:* this option would see formal Resolutions at Court reserved for those Members with a significant length of service on the Court – say, 5 years. For those with a shorter period of service, an informal thanks would be delivered by the Chief Commoner instead (as is currently the case around the City-wide elections). This would ensure that those who had served for some time (and were therefore more likely to have contributed to the City Corporation’s work) would be recognised formally. Whilst avoiding excessive time being added to Court meetings, it would potentially still mean a period of the Court’s time being spent on these matters.

Conclusion

19. This report sets out the background to the Sub-Committee’s concerns at its last meeting concerning retiring Members and sets out a number of alternative options for Members’ consideration.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Example of a formal Resolution

Contact

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Appendix A – Example Resolution on Retirement (Billy Dove, January 2017)

“My Lord Mayor,

I move that the Members of the Court of Common Council express to

WILLIAM HARRY DOVE, OBE, JP

their sincere gratitude for his dedication to the work of the City Corporation over the past 23 years, during which time he served on more than 25 committees, many of which he also chaired.

A teacher by trade, it is no surprise that Billy’s time and activities on this Court reflected his enthusiasm for improving the lives of young people, as well as his charitable nature and his passion for serving residents. Under his Chairmanship the City Bridge Trust considered over 1,300 applications and awarded over £53.2m in grants, supporting organisations large and small and the diverse communities they serve across London. His time as Chairman of the Community and Children Services Committee was marked by his ability to understand the needs of the vulnerable or less able, which ensured that the Committee was always reminded of the people they serve. And as Chairman of the Benefices Sub-Committee, he built up a strong and lasting friendship with the incumbents and their churches, and has been a committed champion for their work.

His civic career culminated in his becoming Chief Commoner in 2015 and, during his year, he used the opportunities presented to him to further those causes close to his heart such as his work with young people and with those less fortunate.

We warmly thank him for his exceptional service to this Court. His passion, his dedication and his jovial spirit will be sorely missed. We all wish Billy a long and happy retirement and send our best wishes to him and Joe in their future adventures.

My Lord Mayor.”