

Committee Members Privileges Sub-Committee	Dated: 19 October 2017
Subject: Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen's IT and Meeting Rooms	Public
Report of: Town Clerk	For Decision
Report author: Angela Roach, Committee & Members' Services Manager	

Summary and Main Report

At its meeting on 21 September 2017 the Members Privileges Sub-Committee considered the use of the new Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen's IT and meeting rooms on the second floor of the West Wing and, in particular, whether they should become a dedicated resource for the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the Police, Finance, Planning and Transportation and Establishment Committees. Whilst the majority of Members were supportive of the IT room being used exclusively by the four Chairmen and their Deputies and to these Members having first call on the adjoining meeting room, it was agreed that the views of all Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen should be sought on the proposals.

The Sub-Committee also agreed to an extra ordinary meeting being convened to consider the results of the consultation prior to making a recommendation to the Policy and Resources Committee.

All Chairmen and Deputy Chairman were consulted accordingly. Of the 50 Members consulted, 28 responses were received by the due deadline. Six Members expressed their support for the proposals, 19 Members were against and three were relatively neutral.

A schedule of the comments received is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

Recommendation

In light of those comments, the Sub-Committee views are now sought on how it wishes to proceed.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Table of Responses Received

Angela Roach

Committee & Members' Services Manager

Town Clerk's Department

T: 020 7332 3685

E: angela.roach@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen response to Consultation

Members who supported the proposals

Comments
Fully support a level of PA for Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Planning, Police and Finance, I am not aware of the workload of the Chairman of Establishment to comment on this. Happy with the room allocation.
I consider these moves to be essential given that I am a full time Chairman and currently have no support and nowhere to meet with important City developers, professionals which I do daily
<p>Speaking in my capacity as Chairman of CLSG Board I have no problem with the proposal since I also have the option for meetings/support at the school.</p> <p>It occurs to me that chairmen of some other busy committees, most notably Investment Committee, might also need more support but I will leave that to the Chairman of that Committee/Sub-Committees to raise as they see fit.</p>
I fully support the proposals.
I am hoping that, as Chairman of Finance, I will have some priority call on one or more rooms – for me, this is more important than extra PA support.
<p>The proposed new meeting room arrangements make eminent sense.</p> <p>I am happy with dedicating the IT room for the four Chairmen and their deputies. I do note, however, that doing this could create a different issue in that ordinary Members will probably never casually met these Chairman or their Deputies, so the current opportunity for informal interaction when they are in Guildhall on the third floor will be lost. There could be a risk that they then become isolated from other Members.</p>

Members who **oppose** the proposals

Comment
<p>I believe this would be an error. Many committee chairman have workloads similar to those of the four committees. This was recognised by the Establishment Committee when it requested a review after the PA project has been running for awhile to determine if some of the other large or otherwise heavy workload committees should also have the assistance of a PA. More generally, I think the effective creation of two classes of committees is not in the City's interest and should be resisted.</p>
<p>I am firmly not in favour of designating the IT room to sole use by the 4 Ch/Dep Ch. I currently use that room frequently.</p> <p>The alternative for members is the 3rd floor IT suite. Rightly or wrongly this is a chat room with some terminals. I do not find that conducive to quiet work. I have been in to the Mezzanine room and, quite simply, it is akin to a cupboard with kindergarten desks. Not ideal.</p>
<p>I was surprised to receive this as I cannot recall any such decisions and it was not on the agenda for the meeting at which it was apparently agreed.</p> <p>I am wholly opposed to what is suggested. It is divisive, attempting to create a privileged group of chairmen and deputy chairmen. If there is to be such a group then it needs to be chosen properly not the way it has been done. I note that the group does not include some chairmen with considerable workloads – Community and Children's Services, Licensing, Culture Heritage and Libraries, Education Board, Barbican etc. Does Deputy Chairman of Police really have a greater workload than Chairman of Community and Children's Services? It also (deliberately I assume) excludes deputy chairmen of Policy and Resources.</p> <p>It is also unnecessary. I have used the room quite a lot since standing down as Policy Chairman. There have never been more than four people in the room and of the eight people identified as having access to the room I have only ever seen one use it. Philip Woodhouse is a regular user of the room and he would be excluded if the proposal is implemented.</p> <p>My strong view is that both the meeting room and the computer room should be available to all chairmen and deputy chairmen, the meeting room being bookable and the computer room on a first come first served basis. If this is not done then the rooms will be little used as well as the concept being divisive.</p> <p>I am copying to the Policy Chairman given that the proposal would adversely affect her deputy chairmen.</p>
<p>I strongly disagree with this proposal and believe it would be divisive to differentiate between an apparently self-selective group of Chairman and other Chairmen. Is it being suggested that a select group of Chairman may have confidential issues to discuss which they may not want to share with other Chairman?</p> <p>There are normally plenty of workstations available in the Members IT Room and there are other facilities in Guildhall to accommodate private meetings of Chairmen, including the Chairmen's Room and the (now) the Chairman of Policy's room (both of which can be booked in advance). The proposal appears to be an attempt at self-advancement by a small group of Chairmen.</p>

I think that the converted room on the 2nd floor should be made available to all Chairman and Deputy Chairmen on a first come first served basis.

I used the old room on a number of occasions. It was never used by more than 3 people at one time. And that was when it was available to all members.

It seems wrong to prefer some Chairmen or Deputy Chairmen over others. If somebody needs to use the room then they should be able to use it when necessary. If the room is full - bad luck - but the chances are that it will never be full or rarely full for long.

For sake of good order I should declare an interest as I chair one committee and deputy chair another. But I actually try to do most of my computer work in the office.

It seems strange to me to make facilities available to some Deputy Chairman and not some other Committee Chairman. e.g. I would be surprised if the workload of the Deputy of the Police Committee is more than the chairman of e.g. Licensing.

I can see that for the PA service restricting it to various committees may make sense but for the use of the room (Of which existence I have just become aware) that this should exclude Chairmen and include some Deputies. If there should be a restriction on any particular room then it seems logical to restrict it to Chairman, rather than certain committees.

I'm not in favour of ring-fencing IT space for specific committees as I can see no justification for it. Given that the work space is shared and I have rarely seen all computer terminals available to members in use at the same time I'm sure committee chairs, deputy chairs and others can all share the work space.

Indeed in my day job our executive team has recently been moved into shared office space with other staff in an attempt to show transparency. It seems odd that the Corporation would be moving in the opposite direction.

I know that certain committees do have a heavy workload - such as Planning and Finance committees - but I don't see the reason for dedicated space, nor the reasoning for the Establishment Chairman to have a space in the room. I'd be interested to hear the reasoning. If it is because the Chairman will be dealing with confidential issues, this argument is invalid as there will be 3 other people in the room privy to the information.

If the room is currently underused as seems to be indicated in the email below, there shouldn't be any problem getting a space in it. In any case, it is very rare that the Member's Room is so full that there is no space to work and it is also rare for there to be enough noise that work is not possible.

I don't support the room being prioritised for 4 Chairman - what will happen if the room is full already and one of these Chairman comes in? Will someone be thrown out to make room for the 'priority' Chairman? How will you decide who needs to leave?

In short, I don't support the room being exclusively used - or used as a priority room for specific Chairman.

I read your email with surprise. Is this the Corporation's attempt of Orwell's Animal Farm, I wondered?

Perhaps certain Members should be reminded that all Members are equally as important as each other. We elect a Member to represent us as our 'Leader' in the form of Chairman of P&R and rightly they given the staff support required to undertake their role.

All other Chairman are as equally as important as each other. Therefore I do not agree with the proposal to reserve the IT room on the 2nd floor for any Chairman/Deputy Chairman. All computer IT rooms should be available to **all** Members.

I was further surprised to see that PA assistance was now to be provided for a select elite few! We have a committee system here at the Corporation, not a cabinet style - or have I missed something??

Even more surprised that we are spending out on PA's when I see how stretched the Committee Clerks are with their ever increasing workloads. Surely if a Chairman needs assistance the best ports of call are to the Committee Clerk and department officers? It would have been far more beneficial for the Corporation to have increased the number of Committee Clerks to lessen the burden on them, whilst allowing them extra time to assist all Committee Chairman and Committee Members. It would also build the required resilience within the Town Clerks Dept. I am concerned to see how stretched the department is at a times and constantly amazed how you and your colleagues keep the boat afloat!

All this extra unnecessary spending for a select group of Members must be extremely demoralising for staff. Especially across the Corporation's other departments which have had to make efficiency savings via staff cuts. Or for those which are short staffed and struggling with heavy workloads in the face of ever growing levels of abuse from certain Members. A very worrying trend which was also highlighted by the consultants from Arcadis. As I have said time and time again, the Corporation's greatest asset is its workforce. It's about time others woke up to that fact before it's too late!

I am opposed to the creation of two tiers of chairmen. We should learn to share the room

Who is to say that the chairman of Epping forest and commons with all its sub committees and consultative bodies is less worthy of use of the room?

If anything we should turn the other little computer room into chairman's room 3

I wholeheartedly agree with Philip Woodhouse.

In fact I was under the impression that it WAS to be a second meeting room for ALL Chairman.

Like you I have meetings with maybe 4 to 6 Officers from the City and Hackney when a Committee Room is far too big. The present Chairmen's 1 is an ideal size for such a meeting and very well used.

It seems perverse that a meeting room should be reserved exclusively for the 4 Chairmen. If this proceeds it will inevitably mean that for significant periods of the day an expensive area will be unused.

I could be persuaded that the 4 Chairmen should have priority for the room but it also should be made available for other Chairmen to use as well. It should not be beyond the wit of officers to devise a booking system that could accomplish this.

If Catherine can make her room available for wider use when she doesn't need it I don't understand why the same principle can't apply here.

I also use this meeting room from time to time. It is a particularly good working environment when you have to focus without distractions as much less disturbance than in the general Members IT suite.

Please can you confirm that it will continue to be for the use of ALL Chairmen.

Being newly elected I am still trying to find my way around. I do however find it strange in this day and age that the City clings to so many outdated practices. When I come to the Guildhall it always seems empty. Usual practice is to have a range of flexible use spaces that can be booked for meetings and otherwise used by anyone who likes the space. This would be much more space efficient. No one is 'full time' and most I'm sure are happy to move on if spaces are booked. Constantly spending money on reconfiguring rather than being creative just cost in time money and general frustration!

I have a problem with these rooms being reserved to four particular chairmen (and their deputies). To imply that the four chairman indicated have a higher level of demand on their time than the other chairmen is an assumption that does not stand serious examination. Much of work of a chairman is invisible to his/her colleagues on the Court of Common Council. I would not intend to comment on my current chairmanship, but note that the chairmen of both the Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest Committees have a huge workload. I do not intend to comment at this stage on the proposal for the same four particular chairmen to be provided with administrative support.

During my time as Chairman of Hampstead Heath, I attended around 100 meetings / consultative committees / working parties / workshops and other events per year, both in the City and at Hampstead, including many at the weekend. I won't bore you with the gory details – but 6-7 hour workshops on the Ponds Project (each repeated so more locals could attend) come to mind. You are an honorary member of local community, writing for the local newspaper, regularly dealing with the Press Office to respond to letters from the public, attending community events, whether cross country or conkers. I expect it is much the same for the Chairman of the Epping Forest Committee.

Other chairmen may be equally busy. All chairmen have some meetings at Guildhall and some meetings elsewhere. All chairmen are different and put what they consider to be an appropriate amount of time into their task. Some chairmen are more “hands on” than other chairmen. And so on.

I do not dispute the need for additional meeting space for chairmen (for example for the Chairman of Planning and Transportation) to meet with senior individuals from outside the Corporation. However this should be a shared resource for all chairmen.

I have no problem with the placing of filing cabinets in the computer room for the four chairmen indicated in your note, as there is a perceived need for these four members to have secure storage; however I do believe that ALL chairmen and deputy chairmen of

grand committees should have equal access to both rooms on a first come, first served basis. I also believe that “regular bookings” for example a particular slot every week, would be an abuse, and should not be permitted.

I welcome the recent change to the Chairmen's Room to add a meeting space next door. However, I would be extremely disappointed if it were to be designated for the four Chairmen referred to in your email. That small room is currently the *only* dedicated space for committee Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen. Yes, there are workstations in the Members' Room but that is a bustling space for all 125 members of CoCo - an excellent hub for contact between members, and good for checking emails etc., but not remotely useful for prolonged work; at least, not for me. When I wasn't a Chairman/Deputy Chairman I tried to work up there on numerous occasions and in the end always gave up, as one cannot remain undisturbed for long.

The Chairmen's Room is completely different: by tacit agreement it's always completely quiet (even when fully occupied), it's well equipped and it is the only space where I can actually get any work done.

I sympathise with the need for improved facilities for the Big Four, but I don't think that taking away the only space dedicated to the other Chairmen is an equitable solution. Speaking selfishly, if the Chairmen's Room were to be taken away from all but four Chairmen, I honestly believe that it would be profoundly deleterious to my ability to get any work done whilst in Guildhall.

On your other point, I have no great objection to the Big Four getting first refusal on the use of the meeting room next door, so long as we can still use it (or Chairmen's Room 1) otherwise.

The only comment I have is that the room should not be for the exclusive use of the 4 committee chairman.

I do not support limiting this to just four committees and their Chairmen.

I am Deputy Chairman of two committees. Police and CLS. My need is not driven by what committees I am on but my personal circumstances. The 2nd floor rooms are under-utilised but provide respite and alternative working areas to the 3rd floor.

It should remain available for all Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen in my view.

I have seen no case to properly support limiting it.

With regards PA support, I fully welcome that.

I thought for good order I should confirm that I believe this to be a totally unacceptable suggestion, divisive and unhelpful to the workings of The Court. Catherine and Wendy are aware of a less than harmonious Court this will only foster this further.

I do feel very strongly about this.

Other Comments:-

Comments
<p>At its meeting in July, the Establishment Committee agreed:</p> <p>'A dedicated PA/Executive support should be provided centrally to City of London Committee Chairmen, principally for the Chairmen of the Planning and Transportation, Police, Establishment and Finance Committees, the Deputy Chairmen of those Committees and the Deputy Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee' (draft minute).</p> <p>During the summer recess, members of Privileges Sub agreed unanimously that the Chairmen's IT room should be divided into two. At the September meeting of Privileges Sub, under (this) 'action taken' there were no written proposals to restrict the use of these rooms, but a discussion which arose from a member stating:</p> <p>'he had understood that the rooms would form part of a package of dedicated support for the Chairmen of the Police, Finance, Planning and Transportation and Establishment Committees' (draft minute).</p> <p>I am wholly in favour of considering whether all or some chairmen need extra staff or working space, but I think this needs to be carefully researched, considered and lead to evidence based decisions.</p> <p>For example, in considering staffing, it seems to me essential to examine the varying levels of officer support already received by different chairmen. In looking at the need for extra space, I think it is important to know whether this is for reasons of workload, time required to be spent at Guildhall or for reasons of privacy.</p> <p>I think the issues of space and PAs would have best been consulted on together. Unfortunately, as I understand it, the process of recruiting the PAs is under way. Hopefully, the job descriptions and any advertisements have not been specific regarding which Chairmen will be served.</p> <p>Meanwhile, I think the use of the two rooms should remain open to all chairmen and their deputies, until a more detailed paper on additional resources for Chairmen and their Deputies has been circulated, for the consideration of all members.</p>
<p>I feel conflicted as one who would benefit, however my understanding from my attendance at various committees was that it was intended to be for the 4 senior committee chairmen and their deputies.</p>
<p>I would agree with the proposed use by four Chairmen if we were a corporate body but since we are a local authority with 125 Members of purportedly equal standing I fear that any form of dedicated use will reinforce the feeling among many backbenchers that they are excluded from much of the decision making and that even some Chairmen are more equal than others with most but not all being ex officio on P & R. I am sure that in practice the use of the rooms can be managed by the new PAs but it should be made clear that meeting rooms, particularly at key hours in the working day, are intended for official business and not, to take one example at random, masonic or Ward Club business which should take place outside normal business hours.</p>