



Report of:	Meeting	Date
Councillor Alice Collinson, Chair of the Mayoralty Working Group and Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive	Council	25 January 2024

The Mayoralty Working Group – final report and recommendations

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1** To report the recommendations of the review of the Mayoral function carried out by the Mayoralty Working Group.

2. Council priorities

- 2.1** Ensuring an updated and fit for purpose Mayoralty function.

3. Recommendations

The majority of the Mayoral Working Group recommends:

- 3.1** That the Mayoral Protocol be amended to emphasise that attending events and fundraising are the choice of each individual Mayor and not a requirement of all Mayors. It is proposed that this amendment to the Mayoral Protocol be accepted.
- 3.2** That there must be greater commitment from councillors to support the Mayor particularly regarding fundraising and attendance at events.
- 3.3** That if the Mayor decides to fundraise, the Mayor may nominate several councillors, in addition to family and friends, to be appointed as their Fundraising Support Group. There is an expectation that this will include at least two current councillors. It is proposed that this amendment to the Mayoral Protocol be accepted.
- 3.4** That the selection method will include the opportunity for any councillor to express interest in being the Mayor. This expression of interest will be submitted to the Chief Executive. It will be considered by a panel made up of the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the main Opposition Group and the Chief Executive, who will chair the panel. If the panel members decide

to do so, they may nominate a substitute. The proposal for Mayor will be considered by Full Council at the Annual Meeting.

- 3.5** That the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Mayoralty Working Group when reviewing the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Special Responsibility Allowances at a future review meeting.

4. Background

4.1 The Council appointed a Mayoralty Working Group at the Full Council meeting held on 14 September 2023 to review the Mayoral function. It was also agreed that the group would feed its comments in to the discussions of the Independent Remuneration Panel and report its recommendations to the Council early in 2024.

4.2 The terms of reference of the Group, as agreed by the Council on 14 September 2023, were:

- To review the functions and role of the Mayor
- To review the method by which the Mayor is currently selected and appointed
- To review the Mayoral Protocol
- To review Mayoral engagements
- To review civic events attended by the Mayor

4.3 The Mayoralty Working Group met on four occasions between October 2023 and December 2023.

4.4 It should be mentioned that several members of the working group were not in support of the suggested recommendations and voiced their concerns throughout the process. These objections centred on the Mayor's personal choice and they believed that there should be a permanent and considerable decrease in attendance at events and fundraising. Furthermore, difficulties concerning the proposed new selection method, particularly the possibility of politics taking over the process.

4.5 At their meeting held on Tuesday 5 December 2023 the majority of the group agreed their final recommendations and conclusions, which were to be submitted to the next Full Council meeting on Thursday 25 January 2024.

5. Key issues and proposals

5.1 Recommendation one - conclusion

5.1.1 The group identified that the review of the Mayoralty was overdue. The current perception is that the role can be daunting for many councillors, resulting in a reduction in the number of councillors

willing to take up the responsibility. This view is due in part to the belief that fundraising commitments are onerous. This is in part owing to the success of previous mayors who have raised large amounts for charity which is putting pressure on upcoming mayors. There is also a view that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's attendance at a large number of events throughout the year has raised expectations and resulted in the roles having a significant financial and time commitment.

- 5.1.2** The majority of members agreed, nevertheless, that each mayoralty was unique. There is a greater need for members to be reminded that the fundraising role is discretionary. The Mayor is not required to attend all engagements that they are asked to attend. The Civic Officer presents all invitations to the Mayor for their consideration and they are able to decline.
- 5.1.3** The group acknowledge that there are a number of engagements that the Mayor must attend including Chairing Full Council meetings, events marking the death or coronation of a monarch, Remembrance Service events and Freedom of the Borough ceremonies. However, the Mayor has the choice to attend additional non-essential events, inside or outside the borough, such as High Sheriff or Lord Lieutenant functions, Galas, community led events, school visits, council run events and others.
- 5.1.4** The group found that traditionally there was an assumption that the Mayor must attend all events that they were invited to. This report is an opportunity to remind the Council that the Mayor has discretion over the events they attend. Similarly, even though the Mayor must nominate a charity for any donations received, the option of fundraising for the charity is at the discretion of the individual Mayor.
- 5.1.5** The group received feedback from a number of former Mayors and Deputy Mayors. Overall, even though the responses acknowledged some difficulties caused by being the Mayor, they were very positive about their time in office.
- 5.1.6** The group recognise the value of highlighting that the Mayoral role, attendance at events and fundraising is the choice of the individual Mayor.

5.2 Recommendation two - conclusion

- 5.2.1** The group noted that family and friends were the Mayor's main sources of support, especially when it came to fundraising. There is consensus that they must rely on family and friends for assistance in carrying out their responsibilities effectively.

5.2.2 Members concluded that Ward councillors' participation at events in their wards was low, and that the Mayor's overall support among fellow councillors was poor. The group take the view that there should be greater commitment from all councillors to attend Mayoral events and if the Mayor decides to, support the Mayor with fundraising.

5.3 Recommendation three – conclusion

5.3.1 The group identified that the current Mayoral Protocol advised that the Mayor form a Charity Committee to organise and support Charity events. The group suggest that this option be revised and promoted. The Mayor may designate a Fundraising Support Group if they would like to raise money for their charity. This will be a group of councillors, family and friends nominated by the Mayor to assist with the organisation and support for fundraising and other events. There should be an expectation that at least two councillors will sit on the group. It will remain the responsibility of the Mayor to organise the administration of the group.

5.4 Recommendation four - conclusion

5.4.1 A majority of members recognised that the selection method of the Mayor required review. The current selection method is driven by length of service and the councillor's seniority (by age). There is also a convention whereby councillors who have previously declined the role three times are not then asked again.

5.4.2 Members reviewed different options for the selection of the Mayor with the main purpose of opening up the current method to councillors who would not qualify (or at least not for several years).

5.4.3 The group identified that in recent years several councillors at the top of the seniority list had declined the position on multiple occasions. The group suggest that this selection method be reformed so that any councillor can register an interest to be nominated for the position of Mayor. The individual councillor may submit their expression of interest in writing or by email. This would need to be submitted to the Chief Executive by 31 January each year to allow sufficient time to go through a selection process before the Annual Meeting. It is proposed that the Chief Executive will chair the panel as a politically neutral party.

5.4.4 When considering which member to nominate as Mayor, those members' ability to meet all the responsibilities outlined in paragraph 2 of the Mayoral Protocol attached at Appendix 1 shall be taken into account. A key consideration may also be length of service.

- 5.4.5** The Chair of the panel will provide appropriate feedback to those who submitted an interest.
- 5.4.6** It is suggested that if no councillor puts themselves forward or if the panel determines that there is not a suitable nomination from the expressions of interest received, the selection method should revert to the previous selection based on seniority in length of service.
- 5.4.7** It is also proposed that, in the year before a local election, the panel provide a shortlist of at least three nominated councillors, who would be listed in order. This would allow the procedure to be more resilient if a single nominated councillor is not re-elected.
- 5.4.8** The councillor nominated as the Deputy Mayor will remain the choice of the individual Mayor.

5.4 Recommendation five - conclusion

- 5.5.1** The group discussed the allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, however acknowledged that the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor were not within the scope of the working group. These would be the subject of a review and recommendation by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). In recent years, some Mayors had been spending increasing amounts of their allowance on purchasing tickets for events, collection money and purchasing of raffle tickets at events. The group encourages the IRP to conduct a full review of the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to ensure that their remuneration accurately reflects their roles and responsibilities.

6. Alternative options considered and rejected

- 6.1** The group was presented with alternative options to revise the role of the Mayor. These options are summarised as:
1. Minimum. Chairing of Council meetings, Aldermen ceremonies and pre-council briefings only. No attendance at any other events within or outside the borough, with the exception of the Royal Garden party, events marking the death or coronation of a monarch, a Remembrance service and Freedom of the Borough ceremonies. (Minimum 22 meetings and engagements).
 2. Restricted. As per option 1 plus major civic events within and outside the borough (35 engagements).
 3. Partial. As per option 2 plus local and council arranged events (151 engagements).
 4. Majority. As per option 3 plus civic events outside the borough that are not ticketed (no cost to the Mayor) (187 engagements).

- 6.2 These options were rejected on the basis that the scope of the role of the Mayor was at the discretion of the individual Mayor.
- 6.3 The group also considered that the selection method should remain the same, meaning that selections would be based on seniority in the length of service. However, the former practice of not asking councillors again if they had previously declined the role three times should be discontinued in order to open up the selection list to additional councillors who had previously declined.
- 6.4 This was rejected in order to allow the selection process to be open for all councillors to express an interest.

Financial, Legal and Climate Change implications	
Finance	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However any future recommendations put forward by the Independent Remuneration Panel regarding the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Mayor and Deputy may have an impact on existing budgets.
Legal	None arising directly from this report.
Climate Change	None arising directly from this report.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
ICT	x
data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a ‘privacy impact assessment (PIA)’ is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
None		

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – Mayoral Protocol incorporating recommendations from the Mayoral Working group.