

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities in consultation with the Executive Leader including Corporate Services, Policy, Strategy And Partnerships
Date	21 February 2024
Present	Councillors Lomas (Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities) and Douglas (Executive Leader including Corporate Services, Policy, Strategy And Partnerships)
In Attendance	Pauline Stuchfield (Director of Customer and Communities) Richard Pollitt (Mansion House, Guildhall and Civic Services Manager)

14. Declarations of Interest (10:00am)

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that she might have had in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

15. Public Participation (10:00am)

It was reported that there had been ten registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme. All registrations were on agenda item 3 Civic Protocols Review.

Cllr Mason expressed concern that the civic party would be expected to undertake events at their own expense with no support, and that as a disabled person support was needed. He noted that there was a need for the car and mansion house flat and that charity fundraising should be picked by the Lord Mayor. He added that there was a cost to being in the civic party. He suggested that budget savings could be made in other ways.

Danielle Mason explained that being a women in her twenties taking on the role as Sheriff's lady whilst working full time, having the car to pick up and take to events had helped with travel. She noted that if an inclusive approach was wanted there was a need to consider the impact on young

people in civic roles. She explained the importance of civic party in visits to school and community groups and added that reducing visits and turning up with a badge devalued the role of the civic party.

Philippa Crowther, Chief Executive of the Wilberforce Trust expressed dismay that no consultation had been carried out by the council in relation to the review. She explained that she was being told that the York Community Fund (YCF) would be used to fund free school meals. She explained that blind and partially sighted people had benefitted from the work of the Lord Mayor's charity and the civic party through funding and other donations and she explained how this had been used.

The Executive Member clarified that the York Community Fund was separate to the York Hungry Minds Fund.

Janet Looker explained that she had been Lord Mayor three times and she welcomed the report in putting forward a framework as to how the Lord Mayor would work. She suggested that Make it York, YorkBID, the council and voluntary organisations to pull together a coherent plan for the Lord Mayor. She welcomed the review of the protocols during a period of austerity.

Cllr Orrell explained that civic party visits for people with disabilities would not be able to happen with the proposed changes. He noted that civic visits to schools in full regalia would not be the same if a badge was worn. He added that there had been no consultation on the changes. He suggested that there was no understanding of role of the civic party with community and faith groups, and the role of the Lord Mayor of York and North Yorkshire and Lord Mayor of York. He noted that it would be a sad day of the proposals were put into effect.

Cllr Cullwick explained that it would be sensible and pragmatic to defer decisions around the mansion house and car as there needed to be consultation and a fresh consideration of the roles and responsibilities of the Lord Mayor of York and North Yorkshire and Lord Mayor of York. Referring to paragraph 42 of the published report he noted that there had been no consultation with those with experience in the role, political parties, other civic parties, and other stakeholders such as schools, charities and organisations. He noted that he would welcome a review with all stakeholders.

Gwen Swinburn explained that she had been asking for transparency over the civic roles. She welcomed a democratic approach to the review and noted that it was not fit for purpose, adding that there had been no consultation with Honorary Alderman. Regarding the decision she

suggested that there should have been proper consultation with a key decision report to Executive.

Brian Watson explained the importance Lord Mayor and Sheriff and gave examples of this. He noted that the Mansion House was the home of the Lord Mayor. He noted that the report had disregard to the Lord Mayor and that those taking on the role knew that it was for seven days a week. He expressed concern regarding the decrease in travel expenses.

Verna Campbell suggested that the paper displayed ignorance towards the role of the Lord Mayor and civic party and she noted occasions on which she had been in the civic party. She expressed concern regarding the loss of the robe and chain which symbolised the cultural and historic role of the Lord Mayor and civic party. She noted that she was the Chair of the York Civic Trust Education Committee and she explained the role of the Committee. She explained the importance of the presence of the Lord Mayor and civic party in their robes made the importance of the two public speaking competitions in what all York secondary schools took part in.

Dave Taylor sympathised with the council budget situation in a period of austerity. He believed that there would be harm to the city with the proposals put forward and he asked that the decision be deferred. He expressed concern that the would mean that only wealthy individuals would be in the Lord Mayor role and he believed that the proposals would mean a drop in funding to charity if it was perceived that the YCF would be used to fill holes in council budgets. He noted the benefits of the Lord Mayor's attendance at events and that the proposals was likely to result in losing more money than would be saved.

The Executive Member noted that the Lord Mayor would be able to choose a charity through the vehicle so that there was transparency in the money raised. The Executive Member thanked public speakers and noted that written submissions had been received. These were from Peter Brown, Richard Watson, Susan Galloway, Anne Reid, Jonathan Tyler and Barbara Boyce.

16. Civic protocols Review (10:38am)

In consultation with the Executive Leader, the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities considered a report that reviewed a range of current civic protocols to ensure that the Civic Party, including use of the Mansion House and Lord Mayor's Charity were supported into the future in a sustainable way at a time of constrained resources.

The Director of Customer and Communities clarified that the Lord Mayor an additional allowance of £3384, not £4,960 as in paragraph 40 of the published report. She confirmed that this did not affect the recommendations within the report. She detailed the report, explaining how the proposals brought in controls to manage demand led pressure, particularly around events. The proposals also provided clarity around rules, decision making, reduced costs and achieved budget savings.

The Director of Customer and Communities explained that this year the cost of the civic party was £134,000 compared to £100,000 in the past and the proposed reduction brought expenditure down to £124,000. She confirmed that there would be no sale of the Mansion House, civic chains, civic car or numberplate. She added that there would not be a change in roles and the proposed changes did not stop visits to schools, community groups and faith groups. She noted that the proposals ensured that the civic office would continue. She noted that the protocols would be reviewed every year.

The Director of Customer and Communities explained that the report had not gone into detail with the Equalities Impact Assessment as they would be produced for each individual in their role. She noted that taxis and DN1 (the civic car) were still an option for visits and that expenses were still available, as well as the allowance for Lord Mayor. With regard to personal safety, she added that where there was a risk to personal safety a risk assessment with the police would be undertaken. She explained that the York Community Fund (YCF) was a new partnership between the council and Two Ridings and the fund would be used to support York charities and community groups and there was no conduit for it into the council budget.

She explained that the Lord Mayor could continue to choose their own charities or the YCF could choose the charities and this was a way of regulating the process of collection only. Regarding decision making, she noted that the Monitoring Officer did not consider it to affect two or more Wards. She noted that there was a cost of running the Lord Mayors charity work associated with council officer time and the YCF could gift aid towards the cost of administration.

The Director of Customer and Communities outlined the recommendations. In response to questions from the Executive Leader and Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities she clarified that:

- Since the Mansion House refurbishment in 2018 it was a requirement of lottery funding to be open five days a week. It was not possible for the Mansion House to be used for residential use as the

home of the civic party. She explained that the recent issue around safety was because the lift was out of use and it was unsafe to live and sleep in the flat. She added that the police and fire and rescue service had advised that the fire escape out of the roof was unusable. The Mansion House, Guildhall and Civic Services Manager noted that fire regulations had been tightened up since the Grenfell fire.

- The badge of office would be bigger and more detailed than the badge issued after a mayoral year.
- The current budget for the civic party was £134,000 and the proposals presented a 7% reduction.
- The difference between the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and Lord Mayor's allowance was explained, with the SRA being for Lord Mayor at Full Council and the Lord Mayor's Allowance being for example charity events.
- Clarity was given on how the YCF would operate. It was explained that York Hungry Minds was a campaign within YCF, with it being the Lord Mayor's choice if they wanted to support the York Hungry Minds and that the Lord Mayor may choose three options from the YCF in grant funding or they could choose charities of their choice.

The Executive Leader thanked all for attending and reiterated the importance of the role of the Lord Mayor and civic party, with there being no change in that and no question of the importance of the Lord Mayor as First Citizen. She noted that there was a £14million gap in funding to the council, increasing to £40million, with no element of the city not affected by it. She explained that this was why the civic party was being asked to participate in cost reductions. She noted that there was a change to how things working in the past and the new proposals helping staff to do their jobs and give focus to the job of Mayor. She noted that the protocols would be reviewed every year.

The Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities thanked all present, including the written representations. She explained that she was proud of the city's history and civic party. She noted that £134,000 was an enormous amount of money spent when the council was having to make cuts and the 7% was a modest reduction. She added that the incoming civic party was focussed on working with groups in York. In consultation with the Executive Leader she then;

Resolved: That approval be given to the:

(a) Changes to civic protocols for introduction in the new Civic Year from May 2024 as follows:

- The York Community Fund (YCF) becomes the permanent mechanism for channelling all Lord Mayor Charity monetary donations;
- Externally funded foreign travel decisions using the lowest carbon option that is practical will be made by the Chief Operating Officer/Leader of the Council by exception; other foreign trips will not be supported;
- Enhancement of a Civic Party webpage on the CYC website;
- Attendance at events outside of the city will not be funded;
- The council will provide support for set agreed events each year. For all other events the civic party will attend at their own cost and wear badges of office;
 - The final list of events will be delegated to the Director of Customer & Communities in consultation with Executive portfolio holders, and should seek to reduce the number of annual/regular funded attendances by 25%;
 - A set of transport protocols will be developed for civic vehicle usage for agreed annual events and for exceptions such as royal visits including:
 - increased use of public transport where possible (with reasonable adjustments made where required);
 - civic party to wear badges of office when on public transport and attending community events;
 - provision of parking passes for personal vehicles to continue, making use of the civic car unnecessary for home to city centre events, or Mansion House/West Offices to city centre events.
- In line with the review of the reduction in funded annual/regular events, the number of occasions the sword, mace, robes and chains are required will be all be reviewed and reduced for their security and protection;
- Badges of office are to be used more regularly and other options including sponsorship of replica chains will be sought over the next civic year;
- The Mansion House will no longer to be used for living accommodation for the Lord Mayoralty;
- Lord Mayor and Sheriff's personal allowances are reduced by a total of £5k (reducing to £1595 and £785 respectively).

(b) Review and publish the Civic Protocols on the council's website by the 1st of May each year;

(c) Officers to take a future report to Executive which will seek to provide options to ensure the financial security of the Mansion House in public ownership, and the financial and climate change benefits to York of other civic assets are maximised.

Reason:

1. To ensure that the Civic Party, including use of the Mansion House and Lord Mayor's Charity are supported into the future in a sustainable way at a time of constrained resources.

2. To ensure that the Lord Mayor can continue to act as an ambassador for the city as its First Citizen, in their role in relation to:
 - a. historical and ceremonial traditions of the Office of Lord Mayor;
 - b. attend and support civic events and community activities which demonstrate the First Citizen's commitment to the Council Plan.

Cllr Lomas, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.04 am].

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