

Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities in consultation with the Executive Leader inc. Corporate Services, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships to be held on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Written representations for Agenda Item 3 - Civic Protocols Review

Peter Brown written representation 16 February 2024

To Cllr Katie Lomas - Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities, City of York Council

These comments are sent to you in advance of the meeting to be held on 21st February 2024.

As a Councillor of integrity and fairmindedness, the writer is confident that you will approach this matter diligently and fairly on the basis of the reports and evidence in front of you.

However, I am greatly concerned that you will make your decision based on a paper that is full of errors of fact, is misleading in many ways and very selective in some of its content and in some areas may cause legal issues because of an apparent lack of research or misunderstanding of some of the issues.

The conclusion must be drawn that the writer of the paper has presented you with a paper upon which it might be dangerous to form a decision without the paper being rewritten after more detailed research. This is not to criticise the author of the paper, as I am sure it was written in good faith.

The comments are set out below

Document

In these comments, by 'document', the writer refers to 'Decision Report: Civic Protocols Review' to be considered on 21/02/24

Meeting details

Meeting details do not give email address to which written representations may be made – merely to democratic services. Requires research to find the address democratic.services@york.gov.uk

Definition of Civic Party

The document fails to define who the Civic party consists of – **may cause legal issues in the future if not addressed.**

Mansion House

The paper refers to proposed significant investment in the Mansion House but fails to mention past very significant investment by third parties, other than the council, which were made on the understanding that the Mansion House was used for specific purposes. **Failing to recognise and address this may lead to future legal problems.**

It also fails to recognise that the Mansion House itself was donated to the Lord Mayor for the express purpose of it being the residence of the Lord Mayor. The legal basis for any alternative use of the Mansion House and indeed the legal title upon which it is held are not addressed in the document. The statement in the document The Mansion House will no longer to be used for living accommodation for the Lord Mayoralty may have not been fully researched by officers as to the soundness of its legal basis. **Failing to recognise and address this may lead to future legal problems.**

The Lord Mayor at home days at the Mansion House, were until relatively recently held on at least two and sometimes three times a year. Hundreds of York citizens turned up to meet the Civic Party and see the Mansion House. It was a major occasion in the York calender for many people in York.

The document omits any details of such events which can only enhance the aspiration in the document This council reiterates its support for a strong Lord Mayor fulfilling the role of First Citizen, reflecting the historical significance and value of the civic function and its role in the life of the city'

Lord Mayor's Charity

The document uses the phrase 'Lord Mayor's Charity' which implies a misunderstanding by the writer. The Lord Mayor initiates a number of charitable activities for the benefit of designated local charities under the generic term Lord Mayor's Charity. However, the beneficiaries are the charities concerned, not an entity known as 'The Lord Mayor's Charity'. There is no such organisation registered with the Charity Commission, unlike the case with various other Lord Mayors in England.

It would be an offence of fraud if the charitable collections initiated by the Lord Mayor were not for the specific charities previously identified as beneficiaries by The Lord Mayor.

Reference is made to 'The York Community Fund'. Upon enquiry, it appears that this is a fund administered by the Two Ridings Foundation, The Two Ridings Foundation is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission with number 1166471.

Firstly, it should be made crystal clear that any funds raised by the Lord Mayor would be placed into a restricted fund specifically for the charities locally based in York which the Lord Mayor has designated when fundraising takes place. **It would be unlawful – indeed would constitute a criminal offence** - for the Lord Mayor to raise funds for charity that were not placed into restricted funds for specific charities, if that is what had been publicised as the purpose.

If the Lord Mayor was to raise funds for charity generally, without designating specific charities, to be placed into the York Community Fund, then the fundraising achievement would significantly decline. Local charities depend on and very much welcome donations via the Lord Mayor. If this link is broken using simply a generic fund, then fundraising would massively decline.

Further, a consideration of The Two Ridings Foundation shows significant administrative costs being incurred, whereas these are minimal under present arrangements. Such costs would dilute the eventual benefit to charities.

In addition, as the very name of the Foundation implies, it is the Two Ridings – North and East Yorkshire. In its governing document and the Trustees Report there is no recognition of the fact that York is a County in its own right, created as such, in 1386, separate from the Ridings. The document states ‘This council reiterates its support for a strong Lord Mayor fulfilling the role of First Citizen, reflecting the historical significance and value of the civic function and its role in the life of the city’. Despite this, the document strikes at the very heart of the historical significance by proposing a relationship with an organisation that manifestly fails to reflect the historical significance.

The document appears to lack clarity in various areas, which may cause legal problems.

DN1 and other assets

The document refers to *the significant estimated value of the DN1 car registration plate*. My understanding is that this is not in unrestricted ownership of the City Of York Council and the document has failed to identify these legal ownership aspects. This matter was investigated at the time Cllr Rod Hills was leader of the council and officer advice was that no action could be taken.

This should have been fully researched by the writer of the document.

The document , if implemented, as it stands, may cause legal problems

Funding of trips and events

The document refers to funding of trips outside York and foreign trips but appears to completely misunderstand the importance of such visits for the enhancement of York’s image, prestige and economic effects on jobs and business. **A blanket ban is a shot in the foot of monumental proportions and will have significance opportunity costs implications and financial loss to the City.**

Reducing funded events within the City fails to recognise the very great value placed upon visits to schools, charities, businesses, care homes,

and hospitals. As a recent comment in the York Press stated, such visits and support are greatly welcomed and assist in a significant way in the work of such organisations. A good example would be the practice of delivering 100 year birthday cards from the monarch to centenarians. Another would be the regular trips around York Hospital wards on Christmas Day morning. To attend such events by public transport without full regalis would fail to meet the objects set out in the council's own document *'This council reiterates its support for a strong Lord Mayor fulfilling the role of First Citizen, reflecting the historical significance and value of the civic function and its role in the life of the city'*

Such a policy will have significance opportunity costs implications and financial loss to the City.

Economic and Tourism role

As in other areas of the document this appears to misunderstand the real benefits to the City, specifically, of a non political holder of a Privy Council office of state (The Lord Mayor) and a senior Crown officer (The Sheriff) compared to the benefits of a politically elected mayor, with all the baggage that entails, whose remit covers the whole of York and North Yorkshire

The proposed policy will have significance opportunity costs implications and financial loss to the City.

Attendance at events, transport, security, regalia and civic chains

These proposed policies reflect so many apparent misunderstandings, ignorance of facts and misleading information almost too many to detail.

Just one example is there is no mention of how the personal security of the Civic Party can be ensured when on public transport. When the writer of these comments was Sheriff, we had to have personal security escorts because of possible terrorist threats. This cannot be discounted in future.

Title Right Honourable

The information in the document is incomplete and misleading. Indeed, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II did confer the title in 1974. However, this was merely confirming and reiterating a title that goes back many centuries and has been confirmed by several monarchs.

It is also incorrect to say The title is honorary and does not extend the powers, functions or duties of the authority or the holder of the office concerned. The Lord Mayor is entitled to the title Right Honourable because the Lord Mayor is, ex officio, a member of the Privy Council and is entitled as of right to attend Privy Council meetings. It is, admittedly, a fact that is over a century since this right was exercised, but it still exists. Only the Lord Mayors of York and London have this status, which is signified by golden robes of a High Court Judge. All other Lord Mayors in England do not have the designation 'Right Honourable' and wear red robes.

This should have been fully researched by the writer of the document.

Sheriffs chain and regalia

The Sheriff is a Crown office holder. The Sheriff does not answer to the council or to The Lord Mayor, although it has been recognised for many centuries the Corporation or later the Council provide logistical support to the office holder, including from time to time replacing the chain of office.

The implication of this is that the chain and regalia are not the property of the Council and can not be sold by the Council. They are merely custodians on behalf of the Crown.

The Sheriff's consort chain was donated to the office by a private individual and is also the property of the office, not of the Council.

In addition to be unable to sell it, the Council have, technically, no authority to say when and where the chains may be worn, although as security is an issue, in practical terms , the Council has an input.

A full explanation of this background has been omitted from the document.

Annex A – events

As with several aspects of the document, the Annex is misleading.

Firstly, events have still not fully recovered from pre Covid days. This should have been highlighted.

More importantly, many of the events in the schedule are the formal events where the Civic Party are expected to attend by York organisations. Many such organisations would be grossly offended if the Civic Party did not attend their activities and it would reflect badly on the City. Such events are significant, but the more significant and important events for the citizens of York are not included, except in passing to say

Additionally, the civic party receive other invites throughout the year on average this will add an additional 300 engagements to the civic year.

These additional invites are at the core of the work of the Civic Party and sadly over the years have been reduced by pressure from Council officers from over 900 per annum, in the time when the writer of these comments was Sheriff.

This schedule appears to completely ignore the very great value placed upon visits to schools, charities, businesses, care homes, and hospitals. As a recent comment in the York Press stated, such visits and support are greatly welcomed and assist in a significant way in the work of such organisations. A good example would be the practice of delivering 100 year birthday cards from the monarch to centenarians. Another would be the regular trips around York Hospital wards on Christmas Day morning. Another would be the regular visits to care homes.

There are numerous such examples and to omit them, other than with a passing reference, from Annex A is entirely misleading.

Conclusion

I hope these comments will inform your decision making

Peter Brown FCCA, DChA
Chartered Certified Accountant
[Address supplied]

Her Majesty's Sheriff of the City and County of York 1990 -1991
16/02/24

Peter Brown written representation follow up 17 February 2024
For attn of Cllr Katie Lomas - Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities, City of York Council

In my comments sent yesterday, I stated:-

The Lord Mayor is entitled to the title Right Honourable because the Lord Mayor is, ex officio, a member of the Privy Council and is entitled as of right to attend Privy Council meetings. It is, admittedly, a fact that is over a century since this right was exercised, but it still exists

I have now been informed that, in fact, a Lord Mayor apparently exercised this right in the 1990s. I have been unable to verify this information, but there may be confirmation in the City records. If true, this reinforces the validity of my comments.

Peter Brown FCCA, DChA

Anne Reid written representation 17 February 2024

[Address supplied]

17th February 2024

Dear Cllr Lomas,

I am sorry that I am unable to attend the Decision Session but ask you to take my comments into account when making a decision.

I was pleased to see that the report appears to recognise the importance of the Rt Hon Lord Mayor of York so I was therefore disappointed that the report then appears to suggest a reduction to the standing of the Lord Mayor and Civic party under the guise of budget cuts. The Lord Mayor is a symbol of the cultural history of the City and there is great value in a civic apolitical role.

I strongly feel that if these recommendations are accepted they will reduce the number of people who feel able to take up the role because of accessibility issues or for financial reasons. They may be unable to access public transport because of disability or lack of public transport provision and there will be those whose financial situation will also mean that they feel unable to accept the role. Personal safety could also be a concern. Surely the Council should be encouraging diversity not restricting the role to those who can afford it.

The paper leaves many unanswered questions.

- What is a “badge of office”? Most residents would consider that to be the Lord Mayor’s chains.
- There is no mention of the Deputy Lord Mayor. If a new protocol is being written then it needs to include their duties and responsibilities.
- Is the report author aware of any legal restraints that there might be? Not everything relating the Lord Mayor and Sheriff is in the gift of the Council.
- Why is there a need to channel the Lord Mayors charitable donations through the YCF? Currently the chosen charities are fundamental in organising the events that raise the money. YCF won’t be doing that so who will? Para 19 refers to “boost fundraising for the York Community Fund” rather than for the Lord Mayors Charities.
- How can the Lord Mayor focus on “community activity” (para 18) when there will be no support for them to carry out that role.

Paragraph 7 and paragraph 18 are contradictory. Para 7 says that the Lord Mayor “plays a fundamental role in the tourism offer of the city” yet para 18 it envisages the tourism role will past to the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. It can’t be both!

Even without that anomaly I find that paragraph 18 is premature. The new Combined Authority Mayor has yet to be elected and you are already suggesting that the Council hives off business and tourism responsibilities to them. I am sure that there will be a need to cooperate with the elected Mayor on these issues but there needs to be a dialogue with them before passing off the responsibilities.

It should be recognised that there is a distinction between the non-elected Lord Mayor and the elected Mayor of York and North Yorkshire which is not reflected in the report. A key feature of the Lord Mayor's role is to be a non-partisan agent for civic development. By contrast, the incoming elected Mayor is standing on a party-political ticket and will propose a set of priorities shaped by their views and beliefs.

I would argue that the Lord Mayor, who represents the City of York in relation to a particular function, cannot simply hand that role to a Mayor of a different authority. Outside bodies will want to know that they are dealing with the person who has the right to represent York. If a new major employer is thinking of investing in the City they would expect to meet the Lord Mayor of York in the first instance even if the elected Mayor becomes involved at a later stage.

Finally, I was disappointed by the lack of consultation prior to the report being written and the short notice once the report was published. Talking to some of those people who have held the role in the past might well have resulted in a report that better reflects the actual role and workload of the Lord Mayor and Civic party but still achieves the savings that you are looking for.

I would ask that you do not approve the recommendations but ask for more work to be done to clarify the many issues raised, reconsider the effect that these proposals will have on the way that future Lord Mayors can carry out their duties in a meaningful way for the citizens of York and consult more widely on how solutions to the need to reduce the budget may be found.

Thank you for your time.

Honorary Alderman Ann Reid MBE
Lord Mayor of York 1993 -1994.

Susan Galloway written representation 17 February 2024

Dear Cllr Lomas

CIVIC PROTOCOLS REVIEW

I refer to the paper which is being discussed on Wednesday 21 February at your Decision Session.

Can you please confirm that any letters which you receive will be appended to the agenda for the meeting and can you also confirm receipt of this letter.

It was with a mixture of sadness and incredulity that I read this paper. Sadness because future Lord Mayors will no longer be able to enjoy the experience that I and others have had of visiting the many organisations which make up our City of York. Incredulity that, against a background of an increase of £1.8 million from the government you are destroying civic life for a saving of £10,000.

Westfield Ward, one of the worst regarding levels of deprivation, has produced 4 Rt Hon Lord Mayors but I doubt any one of them would have been able to do the job without financial support.

The paper appears to have been written in a rush and has more holes in it than a colander. I have no doubt that these will be pointed out to you so I will confine my remarks mainly to the effects that your decision will have on the fabric of the city and the work of volunteers.

Undoubtedly, over the years, there has been a reduction in the number of events to which the Rt Hon Lord Mayor is invited but this does not mean that he or she should be further curtailed in visiting community organisations. When I was Lord Mayor I found that these community

events were some of the best and the opportunity to meet volunteers invaluable in understanding what is happening. To quote another Lord Mayor - "The enormous and diverse range of organisations and activities, which includes many guilds, professional and voluntary groups, is, as exceptional as the number of citizens involved." (Why York is Special by Sir R Cooke)

The citizens of York appreciate and value a visit by the Rt Hon Lord Mayor. It gives their organisation a boost and a feeling that they are valued and not forgotten. Indeed, since 1980, nearly every Rt Hon Lord Mayor has visited Foxwood.

In return it was a pleasure to invite those volunteers for a glass of wine in the Mansion House to thank them for their efforts. I don't think this can be classed as lavish entertaining.

The abolition of the At Home events in the Mansion House is regrettable as again it was an opportunity for the residents of York to come along and look at the best council house in York. It was also an opportunity to network and there were many ideas spawned at these events which benefitted the City.

In your paper there is no mention of gifts either given, usually out of their own pocket, or received by the Lord Mayor.

With reference to Point 5 under Benefits & Challenges you state that the current protocols are based on custom and practice and not informed by formal officer or councillor decision making.

This is untrue as protocols were agreed and implemented in 2000 and each Lord Mayor was given a copy of those.

Regarding the Rt Hon Lord Mayor's Charity. The chosen charities themselves usually organise events with the Lord Mayor lending their name and promoting events. It is the opportunity for charities large and small to gain some traction for their cause. I do not think that they will be keen to see their money disappear into the city coffers whether or not this is badged as York Community Fund.

In conclusion I would say that, far from this being a minor decision taken at an Executive Decision making process, it is a Major decision on which there should have been widespread consultation.

There is no substitute for consulting those who have already “been there and done that”.

I hope that you withdraw this paper to allow full consultation to take place.

Yours sincerely

Alderman Mrs Susan Galloway

Lady Mayoress 1983/84

Rt Hon Lord Mayor 2010/11

Richard Watson written representation 18 February 2024

[Address supplied]

Hon Alderman Richard Watson

Solicitor – Non-Practising

Cllrs C Douglas and K Lomas
Leader and Executive Member
City of York Council
West Offices
YORK

BY EMAIL: Democratic.services@york.gov.uk

18th February 2024

Dear Councillors

DECISION SESSION – EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CIVIC PROTOCOLS REVIEW

I am writing to express my concern in respect of the proposals outlined in the Civic Protocols Review.

By way of background, I have been associated with York's Civic life for around 35 years. I served as an elected councillor for 21 years, was Sheriff in 2010/11 and have been appointed Under Sheriff on eight occasions.

By way of overview of the report, with the greatest respect to the author or authors, there is a striking conclusion to be drawn and that is that they have failed to grasp the very essence of what the Civic role is. I hope the following points will assist in the deliberations which follow:

What is the Lord Mayoralty?

Naturally, the Lord Mayor has diverse duties to perform. On the one hand, there are the statutory requirements which must be met but, on the other hand, the Lord Mayor's involvement with the City and the people can be quite striking and has made significant differences on numerous occasions. Primarily, the ambassadorial role of the Lord Mayor and the Civic Party must never be underestimated. There are numerous examples of work which has been done by Lord Mayors; for instance, entertaining a future president of the United States of America or talking to senior directors of one of the major employers in the City in order to preserve over 100 jobs. Each Lord Mayor, from all of the political parties and none, will have tales to tell of achievements such as these. Next, the Lord Mayor must be a figurehead within the City. There are those occasions when someone has to speak, and in appropriate terms, when an event happens, be it monumentally sad or, equally, significantly meaningful. The third, and most important of the "soft power" roles centres on the engagement of the Lord Mayor and the Civic Party with the City and, particularly, the people who live here. It should never be underestimated the importance and the pleasure which comes when the Civic Party make a visit, be it to a school, a charity, a residential home, or a one-off event. There is a "uniform" which goes

with such occasions and that comprises the chains, the robes, and the Civic car. Such events are pure connectivity between the Council and the people whose Council it is.

In short, the Lord Mayor and the Civic Party symbolise the very cultural, historical, and social fibre of York and, above all its people. To denude the office holders of these symbols would be to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Civic Chains Etc

The report seeks to argue the case that use of the chains, robes and car should be very significantly reduced and, in so doing, advances arguments which are not sustainable. The Watter's chain is only used on very few occasions and the traveling chain is made of silver gilt and is robust. The Sheriff's chain and the Sheriff's Consort's chain are comparatively modern and robust. The Lady Mayoress'/Lord Mayor's Consort chain is, appreciably, antiquated and comparatively delicate. Thus, the argument in the report in respect of vulnerability cannot be sustained. In respect of the robes, the Lord Mayor's robe is new and was financed from outside funds. The new Sheriff's robe is made from non-natural fabrics and is robust. Interestingly, Hon Alderman Brain Watson had given a detailed account of repair work carried out on the old robe, the fact this was minimal and not as suggested in the report.

On numerous occasions, the Lord Mayor and Civic Party will need to be accompanied by one member of staff, if only for administrative purposes, and therefore the role of chauffeur and security officer can be combined, as largely has been the case in the past. In weighing up the huge value which the symbolic presence of the Civic Party create across the City, the value obtained by having the office holders turning out in correct form is invaluable. More significantly, when discharging an ambassadorial function and, perhaps, in the presence of other civic representatives, to be downgraded in a manner proposed is to devalue the influence which the Lord Mayor can have and the projected stance of the City, which we are all anxious to promote economically and otherwise.

The proposals also fail adequately to address aspects of security and disability. At the moment, Lord Mayors can feel relatively safe because

they are in company. The proposals would expose Lord Mayors to a greatly more vulnerable position, neither having the protection of the car nor an officer with them. The restricted use of the Civic car would compromise transport arrangements for those with disabilities, visual or hidden.

If we want to have ambassadorial representation for the City, so to promote it, economically politically and socially, it is vital that we stand out from the crowd.

Protocols

The report suggests that the protocols surrounding the Civic Party are nebulous and fluctuate on a regular basis. Historically, the custom and practice of the Civic Party were very well established and those of us, who have been significantly involved over a number of years, have always been available to give advice on specific aspects concerning the roles, the functions, and the like. However, in recent years, officers, and so far as I can see without any consultation, have unilaterally made alterations and frequently at short notice. That, understandably, has eroded the fundamental base upon which the Civic Party and office used to run, and clarity and structure have been lost.

Mansion House – It's Use

The downgrading of the use of Mansion House by the Civic Party, as proposed, is of particular concern. Mansion House is the hub of civic activities. It is the daily office for the Civic post holders, it is a place where they can hastily change and shower, between engagements - and sometimes the Civic Party have three or more engagements a day - and, until fairly recently, it was a place where the Civic Party could sleep over if they had late nights followed by early morning commitments, making it cumbersome for all to get home. There have been suggestions that Mansion House is used for lavish parties but no Civic post holder to whom I have spoken to can identify with this. Mansion House is used for ceremonial purposes, for instance, formal dinners given for specific purposes or as a venue for the Lord Mayor's charities to fund raise; perhaps, there is a confused interpretation. Whilst the "State" part of the House is, indeed, grand, the domestic accommodation for the Lord Mayor is very standard, as it should be. The flat is a working tool, to help the Civic Party to carry out their role.

There is an ambiguity which surrounds the state of the lift. In or about 2018, the Civic Party were advised that the lift was fireproof, that is to say that, as it was outside of the building, it was safe to use in the event of a fire. Seemingly, modern advice has contradicted this. This, in itself, is of concern and worthy of further investigation. Suffice it to say any concerns in respect of the fire safety of the flat can be adequately addressed by the provision of a fire escape. Historically, the building had a fire escape but, seemingly, this was removed because of the adequacy of the lift which was installed.

Mansion House – It's Status

It is well documented that Mansion House was provided by Civic forebears, exclusively to provide a home for the Lord Mayor for the time being. Whilst the definition of what amounts to a home invariably changes with time, the nub of the matter is that Mansion House was provided to facilitate the role of Lord Mayor by the Lord Mayor for the time being. Despite questions having been asked, I am not aware that there is any evidence to suggest that this role has been surrendered and, indeed, I query how that would be effected. Accordingly, any title which the Council has to Mansion House is conditional upon its being facilitated for appropriate Civic use. Certainly, that aspect is not addressed in this report nor, indeed, has it been addressed over the years, and I conclude this is a fundamental deficiency.

Mansion House – It's Future

The significant restoration carried out at Mansion House seven or so years ago, and largely funded with Lottery money, created a blueprint to afford mixed use for the House, being Civic use, being a museum, widely available to visitors, and a revenue source through commercial enterprise. Whilst many disapproved of the balance, the concept appeared to produce a viable route forward. Regrettably, expectations have not been met and I glean the flaw is not at conceptual level but in the strategic planning and tactical delivery.

Lord Mayors' Charities

The report fails to appreciate the manner in which the Lord Mayors' charities operate during the Civic year. The arrangement is not that the Lord Mayor promotes the fundraising but that, the charity or charities,

which have been selected, then can use the Lord Mayor's endorsement as a platform on which they themselves can fundraise. That is to say, the charity itself does the fundraising with, effectively, endorsement by the Lord Mayor. The proposal that all funds should be routed to a specific charity, with the destination of such funds being decided elsewhere, is quite unacceptable. In reality, such arrangement would be the death knell of such fundraising as there would be no incentive for charities, fundraising committees or the Civic Party to be involved.

Next steps

It is axiomatic that the report, as published, has provoked an extraordinarily strong reaction; who would have imagined that its existence would have featured on the BBC's flagship news programme, "Today" yesterday morning? Its reporting there is indicative of the strength of feeling which the report has provoked. There are a number of issues not adequately addressed in the report and a number of issues which surround the role of the Lord Mayor which need resolving. I am certain that no one is unsympathetic to the pressures on local government finances and that there is a need for value for money. In that the report raises as many issues as it answers, may I respectfully suggest the proper way forward is to defer any decision making for the moment and to establish a working party, members of which come from a wide background: elected councillors, appropriate officers and those experienced with the Civic role stop. In respect of the latter category, I am certain a number of people, and I include myself, would be willing to help in endeavouring to provide a structure which discharges the expectations of the role and also offers a value for money solution.

I hope these observations are useful to you in your considerations.

Yours sincerely

Richard Watson

18.2.24 CYC

Jonathan Tyler written representation 19 February 2024

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Cllrs C Douglas and K Lomas
Leader and Executive Member
City of York Council
West Offices
YORK

[Address supplied]
19 February 2024

By email

A City as busy and variegated as York functions through a complex ecosystem of businesses, public bodies, charities, local parts of national organisations, specialist institutions, museums, educational establishments, citizen initiatives and so on. Most of the time they go quietly about their tasks, so much so that they are taken for granted. That is undesirable if people become increasingly unaware of the contribution each of these bodies makes to the quality, coherence and stability of communal life.

The Lord Mayor and the Civic Party have a crucial role in sustaining these groups by visiting their operations, understanding their functions, encouraging their staff, ensuring them publicity, telling others about what they have learned - and on occasions presenting them with awards. During my year as Sheriff I learned so much: from care homes to the team preparing audio news, from scouting groups to food researchers, from Guilds to initiatives in struggling communities, from hobby clubs to the life of the Minster - and we were there amidst grief when a respected policewoman died.

I am particularly proud that I was able (with excellent support from the civic officer) to broaden our diary with visits to places commonly

unpublicised: Network Rail control, the catering and laboratory departments at York Hospital, gritting-lorry drivers at Hazel Court and a cancer research unit at York University.

The paper for your decision session fails to understand this range of activities, many of which lie beyond the immediate priorities of the Council. It misunderstands the symbolic and practical significance of the Mansion House. It lists some regular civic commitments but bundles the rest together by referring to 300 other events. It devalues the significance of visits by proposing to strip them of the pomp and ceremony that some groups value, and it cuts back on the number of visits by suggesting impractical arrangements such as travelling by bus or by requiring the civic party to pay for events themselves (which could of course be deemed discriminatory). And it is ill-informed, for example by querying the link with the University of Hull while barely mentioning civic involvement with significant events at York's two Universities.

I have no problem with a reduction in the Lord Mayor's and Sheriff's allowances, and I accept that there are some occasions when it would be appropriate to use a bus (though as the first Green Party team we did not find this easy). However I note that no other savings are quantified and are effectively left to a steady erosion of the functions and value of the Civic Party. My experience was that the hard work (and some treats) that came with the job was to the great benefit of the life of the City in its many facets. To lose that now when so much else is faltering would be a huge mistake. I appeal to you to reject the paper and to consult broadly on a more considered course.

Jonathan Tyler

Sheriff, 2016-2017

Barbara Boyce written representation 19 February 2024

Hello Katie

I want to let you know that I am mostly in support of your changes to the role and support of the Civic Party.

There are a few things that it might be an idea to consider:

- Reducing the role of the Sheriff to occasional support or standing in for the Lord Mayor. The Sheriff is unelected and is there just on the say-so of the Lord Mayor so there is no control on who it is. If the Sheriff and consort were not at most events it would remove the need for a very expensive limousine with extra seats - a smaller and more economical vehicle could be used which could have other uses when not being used for the LM. Most cities do not have 4 in their civic parties and it seems excessive.
- Not being quite so prescriptive about the Lord Mayor's Charities - these are a personal choice but there is a need for charities who have the capacity to do a lot of the fundraising and running events. This is especially the case since the civic support for the fund-raising was removed some years ago. I had a selection procedure for charities and the willingness to cooperate was vital. It also means smaller charities can get a chance to be involved (I had a small refugee charity as one of mine which created some grumbles, but their contribution was far greater than their size).
- Remove support from the free tickets and food at every meeting of York Races - some people take advantage and go every time and it is very noticeable and looks greedy!
- Consider whether the supported events are all vital - there are organisations in the city who consider themselves entitled to civic visits who are not as traditional and historic as they would have people believe. The endless guild services, parades and dinners are all full of self-appointed 'dignitaries' and are of little relevance to the majority of citizens. Community organisations, charities and small businesses are just as important as the men in red robes! Personally I felt all the 'Freedom Courts' were an expensive luxury - often celebrating people who had no connection with the city other than an ancestor who ran a business.
- Maybe make the role more secular - the expectation is that you attend large numbers of Church of England Services - I made an effort to attend Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and other faiths' events but it wasn't expected - which makes the Lord Mayor less relevant to those of other or no religions.
- Perhaps consider having the Mansion House managed professionally and expected to make money? I am shocked that the lift is not working or considered fire compliant. Up to 2018 a lot

of money was spent refurbishing the MH and everyone was assured that the lift was the only possible way of getting in or out when there were no staff in attendance. Appears that there has been bad advice or inadequate work done. There was always a reluctance to change staff or bring in outside expertise.

I hope you consider these helpful - I know it's very difficult and there are certain ex LMs who like to make a lot of noise and want nothing to change. However it has needed reviewing for a very long time even if there wasn't the current financial difficulties.

Many thanks and good luck, you have my support.

Barbara Boyce