

This note is one of a series placed in the Almanac for the guidance of livery masters, wardens, and their clerks, especially new ones, seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them. Most are written by a past chairman of the Livery Committee, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page.

## **Common Hall**

### **Election of the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs**

This note is specifically intended to describe the annual election of the new Lord Mayor/Sheriffs as it relates to *Masters*, though much of it is equally relevant to any liveryman attending Common Hall at Guildhall.

#### **Introduction**

There are two Common Halls each year – one principally to elect the two Sheriffs on Midsummer Day (24th June), and the other to elect the Lord Mayor each Michaelmas Day (29th September). The two are very similar in format, but prior to the election of the LM only, there is a church service at St Lawrence Jewry, and hence the timings vary for each. All masters (of *livery* companies, *not* of guilds or companies without livery) process at both (and to the church service), and most would consider these elections to be a three line whip occasion for every master.

It is one of the relatively rare occasions when it may be appropriate for a substitute to represent the master, if the office holder is eg sick, or more likely, holding office elsewhere (eg as an alderman)

#### **Prior to Common Hall**

Livery clerks will receive a notice from the Town Clerk summoning liverymen to attend Common Hall, together with entry passes for liverymen wishing to attend. Beadles will need to arrange to have their master's gown at Guildhall Crypt on the morning, and clerks will need to brief masters re breakfast beforehand and lunch after. To be on the safe side, masters should have a pass, though as for all entitled liverymen, this is not essential, so long as the voter's name is on the Guildhall electoral register (which is held in the ambulatory for inspection).

#### **Breakfast**

One of the most active livery caterers (Cook & Butler) invite some masters and clerks to breakfast in the Guildhall Members' Dining room before the LM Election. This is an invitation event, and not all masters should expect to receive one (typically those who use Mark Grove may expect an invite). Timings are usually about 8 for 8.30am, and all is over well in time to get to Guildhall. Badges are worn, but not gowns.

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## **Crypt**

In addition to the breakfast described above, tea, coffee are served in the Crypt for masters, clerks, and beadles from about 9.30am before the LM election, or later for the Sheriffs.

## **Dress**

Masters wear gowns and badges, and nowadays normal business day dress. But some (including liverymen, not gowned) will wear morning coats, and some ladies will wear hats. It is wise to leave coats and bags at home, thus simplifying security and cloakroom arrangements. This applies even more so to other liverymen attending.

## **Michaelmas Day**

Then at 10.20am (on 29<sup>th</sup> September, or the nearest weekday, or in 2019, 2<sup>nd</sup> October) a procession is formed in the Crypt of the 110 masters in pairs, juniors leading, with Master Mercer & Grocer bringing up the rear. Guildhall staff from the Remembrancer's Department marshal the masters into order. It helps if masters know where they should be (ie know their precedence – amazingly not all do – and who their immediate neighbours are, ditto).

## **St Lawrence Jewry**

The procession then moves to the church, preceded by the Livery Committee, and with the Court of Aldermen following behind. On arrival, masters take their places, and the service proceeds (starting at 10.45am), including a short sermon, and a collection.

After the service is over (11.35am), masters process (in reverse order) back to Guildhall, and thereafter, into the Great Hall, where they have reserved seats at the front, with Great 12 masters seated on the Dais (together with the three masters of the mother companies of the retiring sheriffs and incumbent LM)

## **The Election process – Lord Mayor**

This note does not seek to describe the detail of the procedure, but in essence the livery is invited to vote for two aldermen (who have also served sheriff), from which two the Court of Aldermen will then choose one. The names of each will be announced by the Common Serjeant, in the order in which it is expected they will go forward. The response to the first name read out is traditionally “*Aye*”. The second name response will be “*Next time*”. And any subsequent names – “*Later*”. Hence the first two names will be deemed elected, and the Court will then choose the first. There will be no surprises.

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## **Speeches**

After the election process is complete, the master of the mother company of the current LM puts a Resolution of Thanks to the soon to retire Lord Mayor, which should be a SHORT speech (suggest three minutes). It is seconded by the Chief Commoner, ideally with the simple phrase “I have pleasure in seconding the motion”. After the LM has responded, the master of the mother company of the aldermanic sheriff puts a Resolution of Thanks to both the Sheriffs (who retired the previous day), which again should be a SHORT speech but refer equally to both sheriffs. It is seconded by the master of the non aldermanic sheriff, as above.

## **Midsummer Day**

On 24th June (or the nearest weekday), for the election of the Sheriffs, the ceremony is very similar, but there is no church service. Hence timings are a bit later, and masters (in the Crypt) form their procession (exactly as on 29th September) at 11.30am and move straight into the Great Hall.

## **The Election process – Sheriffs**

This note does not describe the detail, but the livery is invited to vote for two sheriffs, one of whom will usually be an alderman and the other not. But on 24th June 2020, for the seventh time, two aldermen will stand to be elected sheriffs, Alison Gowman and Nicholas Lyons. A separate note describes why.

The names of each candidate will be announced by the Common Serjeant, and unlike the election of the LM, here the livery really do decide who is elected (where there are three or more candidates). But by convention, liverymen invariably vote for the aldermanic candidate, and one of the others.

After the contested election in 2012 proposals were agreed to actively discourage the losing candidate from routinely demanding a poll (which in the past invariably followed a contest, two weeks later on 8th July – a costly and time consuming exercise). The first subsequent contested election was in 2018, and no poll was demanded (nor following the contest in 2019), though it remains the legal right of any candidate to demand a poll, notwithstanding a careful and accurate count of hands at Common Hall.

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## Speeches

At the election of sheriffs, the candidates each make a speech of three – four minutes.

### **Note for liverymen who are not masters, and clerks who are not liverymen**

The Great Hall will be full for both Common Halls, and overflow accommodation arranged in the Old Library. If liverymen wish to secure a seat in the Great Hall, you would be wise to arrive well before 11.30am, and many will be there before 11 o'clock. Clerks who are not liverymen are not entitled to seats in the Great Hall, but limited reserved seating is arranged in the Musicians' Gallery. Places should be requested in advance from the Town Clerk's department.

### **Conclusion and lunch**

After the election and ceremonial are complete, the Common Cryer declares *God Save the Queen*, to which all assembled respond *God Save the Queen*. Aldermen, masters etc then process out of the Great Hall (in reverse order to the procession in). Most then adjourn to a livery hall or elsewhere for lunch. The ceremony on both occasions usually concludes between about 1pm-1.30pm, and caterers will need to be flexible as to what time lunch is able to begin.

The Lord Mayor will formally take office at the Silent Ceremony on the day before the LM Show, and the new Sheriffs are installed on Michaelmas Eve (28th September) followed by their Sheriffs' Breakfast.

Nigel R Pullman

5th October 2016 (updated September 2019)

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email [nrpullman@btinternet.com](mailto:nrpullman@btinternet.com)