



Broad Street

The Role of the Chief Commoner

John Scott JP, CC

The election of a Member as Chief Commoner by his colleagues in the Court of Common Council is the highest honour which the Court can bestow on one of its members. It is remarkable therefore that, after waiting for many decades, the Broad Street Ward should provide two in quick succession, Deputy John Bennett in 2014, and now myself.

The question I am asked most frequently is about the role and its purpose. Originally the Chief, as the holder is

known during their year, chaired the City Lands & Bridge House Estates Committee, the principal committee of the City Corporation which controlled the City's property and revenues. Nowadays the lead committee is the Policy & Resources Committee, chaired by Catherine McGuinness, and so she is seen as the policy leader of the Council whereas the Chief is the civic leader of the Court.

In that capacity an important part of the

job is to promote the policies and values of the City Corporation and increasingly the Chief acts as the fourth pillar of the civic team, supporting the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs in their increasingly busy lives. With 110 livery companies and 25 Ward Clubs, not to mention a massive programme of events both here and abroad, there is no way in which the Lord Mayor can cover the whole ground but, by spreading the burden, the hope is that, while everyone would prefer the Lord Mayor to attend their own event, on occasion they will be content to have a pale substitute, even the Chief Commoner! We are fortunate this year that the Lord Mayor will be attending our own Ward Club lunch in his honour, as befitting a liveryman of the International Bankers based in our Ward.

While the Chief's programme is not as hectic as that of the Lord Mayor, it is definitely a full-time job, sometimes for seven days a week, and it is a great help to have a flat at Guildhall during the year, if only somewhere to change clothes and occasionally relax between engagements. The Chief is ex-officio on every City Corporation committee, of which there are well over 100 when you include sub committees and working parties, and is also responsible for approving all external uses of Guildhall.

A large part of the Chief's role, apart from the ceremonial, is to represent the interests of his fellow Common Councilmen, championing their rights and ensuring that their voice is heard at the highest levels and that they are kept informed of the City Corporation's policies in a rapidly changing world. The Chief is responsible also for internal discipline which is usually done by having a discreet word with the Member who might have unwittingly caused offence as anything more serious is taken through the Code of Conduct procedure.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the job is the variety of people that you

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Chief Commoner with Andrew Mlangeni, compatriot of Nelson Mandela, after his Freedom ceremony





Broad Street

Who We Are



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Committee Appointments:

Markets
Gresham (City Side)
Standards

Committee Appointments:

Culture Heritage & Libraries
City of London Freemen's School
Gresham (City Side)
Guildhall School of Music & Drama (Deputy Chairman)
Port Health & Environmental Services

Committee Appointments:

Capital Buildings
Christ's Hospital
Education Board
Finance
Gresham (City Side)
Investment
Livery
Planning & Transportation (Chairman)
Police
Policy & Resources (Vice Chairman)
Property Investment Board

Committee Appointments:

Chief Commoner
Christ's Hospital
Gresham (City Side)
Guildhall Club (Deputy Chairman)
Hospitality WP (Chairman)
Markets
Museum of London

CONTACT US

To write to any of your Members, to let us know if you wish to receive this newsletter by email in future, or to inform us if you wish to be taken off the distribution list write c/o

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We are always happy to talk to workers and residents within the Ward about any issues you may wish to raise. Please contact us if you would like to arrange a meeting.

Ward Constables

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COMMUNICATING WITH THOSE WHO LIVE AND WORK IN THE CITY OF LONDON



**Pearly Kings and Queens
at their traditional event in
Guildhall Yard**

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meet from all walks of life. They range from Kings and Queens, both real and of the Pearly variety, to Government Ministers, stars of the cultural and sporting worlds, and school students being rewarded for stellar performances. It is often the less spectacular events which are the most moving, as when a group of very handicapped pupils from schools in deprived areas of the East End received their trophies from the Countess of Wessex on behalf of the London Children's Flower Society.

At the time of writing I am just over half way through my term and I can say already that it has been a huge honour and privilege to hold the office of Chief Commoner, supported and indeed enabled, by my wife Claire. Sadly, the Chief is not for life but only for a year and on 25th April 2019 I hand over to my colleague Deputy Tom Hoffman MBE. Hopefully the Ward of Broad Street will continue to go from strength to strength with the possibility of future Sheriffs and even a Lord Mayor among our number. One day I might even write about my latest job as Keeper of the Royal Philatelic Collection, but that story is for another day.