

Agenda Item No: 4
Report To: O&S
Date: 25th September 2012
Report Title: Review of changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S review in 2010.
Report Author: Senior Scrutiny Officer



Summary:

Following a review of the Mayoralty in 2010 some amendments were made to its day-to-day functioning. These amendments were introduced at the start of the municipal year in May 2011. It was agreed that an update report on the effect of these changes would be provided to the O&S committee about 18 months after the implementation of the changes.

Key Decision: No
Affected Wards: N/A
Recommendations: **The O&S Committee is asked to consider the report on the implementation of the Mayoralty review.**
Policy Overview: None
Financial Implications: None
Risk Assessment N/A
Equalities Impact Assessment N/A
Other Material Implications: N/A
Exemption Clauses: N/A
Background Papers: None.
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Report Title: Review of changes made to the Mayoralty following the O&S review in 2010.

Purpose of the Report

1. This report updates the Committee on the effect of the changes implemented in May 2011 on the functioning of the Mayoralty which stemmed from a review undertaken by an O&S Task Group.

Background

2. One of the recommendations arising from the scrutiny of the council's 2010/11 budget was that the O&S Committee should review the corporate objectives of the Mayoralty prior to the next budget. As a budget saving the Mayor's Garden Party had been deleted the year before; the current economic situation was still difficult and it was considered that the public would be concerned if no budget reductions were put forward for the Mayoralty when other areas of the council's budget were having to be trimmed. Reductions in the cost of the Mayoralty would contribute to the 15% cost reduction in the council's proposed 5 year business plan.
3. In response to this recommendation the O&S Committee decided to set up a task group to review all aspects of the Mayoralty with a view to making financial savings. The Mayoralty Task Group met 4 times from June to September 2010 and made its report to the O&S Committee in October 2010.
4. The Task Group's review of the Mayoralty included:-
 - Transport and security arrangements for the Mayor
 - The engagements the Mayor attends
 - The cost of the Mayoralty
5. Once the review was concluded the Task Group reported their recommendations to the O&S Committee. The following were approved and adopted by full Council in December 2010.

(i) the selection procedure for choosing a Mayor should remain unchanged but nominations be discussed by Group Leaders prior to discussion within the Groups themselves followed by the Group Leader reporting them to the informal Group Leader meeting which would consider the nominations.

(ii) the Mayor's Parlour be used more often for internal meetings and for those meetings of visiting dignitaries with the Leader/Chief Executive.

**(iii) the Mayor's Guidance Notes be amended as below and as necessary to reflect any other changes:-
The Borough Duties part of the "Responsibilities" section, to be amended to read:
"To promote the Borough as a place to visit through external**

contacts, and tourism events; the Mayor to attend engagements only within the Borough of Ashford with the exception of the Queen's Garden Party, the High Sheriff of Kent's Inauguration Service and events hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, other events should be regarded as exceptional. If the Mayor wishes to attend other engagements outside of the Borough, unless his/her attendance has been agreed, the total cost (ie ticket and travel) would have to be funded personally or from the Mayor's Allowance.

An additional duty to be added to this section:

"To be involved in events marking the achievement of major milestones in Ashford's growth".

(iv) the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Entertainment Allowances be combined and reduced from (combined total) £7,390 to £5,800 and re-named "Mayoral Entertainment Allowance".

(v) the Personal Allowance of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be unchanged.

(vi) if the Mayor's Allowances are used up before the year end, no further funding be made available.

(vii) the majority of the Mayor's engagements should be in the Borough of Ashford with only a few exceptions: the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, the Inauguration Service for the High Sheriff of Kent and events hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent. Other events should be regarded as exceptional.

(viii) the Mayor could attend any engagement that fell outside of these guidelines but would be expected to fund the total cost of that engagement (ie ticket and travel cost) either personally or from the Personal Allowance.

(ix) the lease on the current Mayoral car be terminated and when the Mayor needs transport, this is to be provided by a private hire company.

(x) the accompanying of the Mayor on "walkabout" when wearing the Civic regalia be regularised. On occasions when it is not possible for the Mayor to be accompanied, the Mayor to wear the badge only.

(xi) on occasions when the Mace is required, these duties be covered by an employee of the Council, other duties be covered by an employee of the Council on an ad hoc basis.

(xii) it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive a progress report in September 2012.

The changes agreed were implemented from the start of the 2011/12 municipal year.

This update will concentrate on the effect of these recommendations on the financial aspects and functioning of the Mayoralty.

Comparison of the 2011/12 and 2012/13 Mayoralty with previous years

Mayoral Budget

6. the Revenue budget for the Mayor is published as part of the Council's Budget book on the Council's website and the outturns are shown in the table below for the financial years from 2007/08 to 2011/12.

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Outturn (£)	70,781	70,062	67,890	57,750	43,225

The expenditure costs of the Mayoralty includes employee costs, supplies and services, transport costs and internal recharges. As can be seen, since 2007/08 the cost of the Mayoralty has been falling steadily even before any budget restriction measures were applied. From 2011/12 the figure does not include amounts for the Mayor's attendant's salary (etc) but does include a modest amount for 'salary' and 'uniform' – to be used as and when required for the officer acting as the Mace bearer.

Engagements

7. When the Mayoralty Task Group looked at the number and distribution of the Mayor's engagements the following information was provided:

Engagements	Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
In the borough		206	172	184
Ticket cost £		246	210	354
Out of the borough - total		81	79	50
Civic		52	37	24
Charity		29	42	26
Ticket cost £		1,852	2,051	985
Total Engagements		287	251	232
Total ticket cost £		2,098	2,261	1,339

For comparison the following table gives the same information as applicable for 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13(part)

Engagements	Year	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (to end July 2012)
In the borough		191	158	78
Ticket cost £		227	454	15
Out of the borough - total		56	28	13
Civic		24	22	12
Charity		32	6	1
Ticket cost £		946	687	75
Total Engagements		246	187	91
Total ticket cost £		1,173	1,141	90

Expenditure from Mayor's Entertainment allowance

8. Set out below is a table which details a breakdown of expenditure from the Mayor's Entertainment Allowance for the years 2007/8 to 2009/10.

Year	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £
Entertainment Allowance	6500	6670	6670
Expenditure	6282	4770	4194

The expenditure figure includes the cost of any tickets for events, charity donations, expenses for hosting events, flowers, wreaths etc. The sort of events hosted by the Mayor include visits by students/schoolchildren, local groups and guests from other Boroughs/Districts to the parlour/chamber/other venue.

The table below gives the comparable figures for 2010/11 to 2012/13(part)

Year	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £ (to end July 2012)
Entertainment Allowance	6670	5800*	5800*
Expenditure	3716	4748	858

* Since May 2011 the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's entertainment allowances have been combined, renamed as 'Mayoral Entertainment allowance' and reduced to £5,800.

Even with the reduction in the Mayor's entertainment allowance, the full year figures from 2007/08 to 2011/12 show that the expenditure on this allowance has always been well within budget.

Transport

9. Prior to the changes being implemented, the council had a car and a full time attendant/chauffeur for the Mayor. Costs for providing transport included the cost of the car lease, fuel, insurance, plus an amount for the hire of a car & chauffeur to cover when the Mayor's attendant was on leave or otherwise unable to perform his driving duties. Sadly the Mayor's attendant passed away in 2010 and in view of the impending review of the Mayoralty the post was kept vacant.
10. Following the adoption of the review recommendations in 2010, it was decided to relinquish the lease on the Mayor's car and to employ a private hire company to transport the Mayor as and when necessary. The Task Group were keen to maintain security arrangements for the Mayor and requested that the private hire chauffeur should accompany the Mayor at events providing security for the Mayor and the regalia (on occasions when the Mayor was attending an event that did not require transport s/he would be accompanied by the Civic Engagement officer/another ABC officer, or would wear the Mayor's badge rather than the chains).
11. There is no obvious trend in the level of transport costs incurred from one mayoral year to the next. Factors that influence the cost include the number of engagements, how many are in/out of the borough, where the Mayor lives, if the Mayor drives him/herself to many engagements and, if so, how much mileage was claimed for this.

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Transport costs £	18,947	16,731	11,085	# 20,642	8,929	estimate 12,050
# includes the severance payment for the early termination of the lease for the Mayor's car and the hire car & chauffeur cost covering the period when the Mayor's attendant's post was vacant.						

Ceremonial Duties and Security Issues

12. The Mayor's attendant accompanied the Mayor on engagements providing security for the Mayor and the regalia and, when required, was the Mayor's mace bearer.
13. As mentioned in paragraph 10, when wearing the chains the Mayor is now accompanied by the private hire chauffeur or the Civic Engagement officer/another ABC officer. The number of occasions when the Mayor needs a mace bearer are few and this function has been provided by an ABC officer as and when required. These arrangements have worked satisfactorily and the cost of having an ABC officer acting as Mace bearer on those occasions is recharged to the Mayoral budget.

14. The chains and other items of regalia are valuable and have to be kept secure. In the past, the Mayor's attendant would have been able to take the chains from the secure store before an engagement and return them afterwards. He would also have been able to assist the Mayor in putting on the chains.
15. To take account of the changed circumstances the following arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the Council's Insurer's policy conditions are complied with: during office hours the chains can be taken from/returned to the secure store by the Civic Engagement officer/another ABC officer and the Mayor has to come to the civic centre to collect them and be assisted in putting them on. Out of office hours the Mayor has to come to the civic centre to collect/return the chains him/herself. The Mayoress/Escort/driver then assists the Mayor with the putting on of the chains.

Mayor's attendance at Events out of the Borough

16. Before May 2011 there was no restriction imposed on what events the Mayor could attend. Many invitations and requests for attendance of the Mayor, for events both in and out of the Borough, are received every year. Some Mayors had previously decided to concentrate their events and engagements within the borough, whilst others attended events which were more widely spread (mainly within Kent but with some in London). With the financial constraints that the whole council was having to come to terms with the Task Group considered it reasonable that the public would expect the Mayor's office to accept austerity measures too.
17. Restricting the events that the Mayor could attend out of the borough would reduce the amount spent on transport and tickets (where applicable) for those events. Under the revised arrangements the Mayor would still be able to attend certain prestigious events such as the Queen's Garden Party and others within the guidelines, or for which agreement had been given.
18. The implementation of these arrangements began in May 2011. As mentioned above, in the past the number of 'out of the borough' events attended by any one Mayor was their own choice and inclination so the overall impact of the changes will not be particularly apparent for several years to come.

Mayor's Assessment

19. The current Mayor was also Mayor in 2003/04 and is therefore in a very good position to comment on the current situation in comparison with what he experienced before the changes were introduced. A summary of his views is set out below in italic.
 - a. Transport arrangements – hire car and chauffeur vs ABC Mayoral car and Mayor's attendant.
The system works perfectly well. The only issue that will arise is that, for local events, if the Mayor is wearing the chains and doesn't have a Mayoress or Escort then self-drive would not be appropriate and the hire car will be needed for the driver to act as escort.

Note: Alternatively the Mayor could wear the Mayor's badge rather than the chains and then an escort would not be necessary.

b. Security arrangements –

1. for regalia – *no problem with the arrangements and with the signing in to collect the chains.*

2. for the Mayor at events – *either Escort or driver needed, happy with that arrangement.*

c. Restrictions on events that can be attended.

There are restrictions, but this has not created a problem. When there has been a low key event, of personal interest, that the Mayor would like to attend e.g. cricket at Tunbridge Wells, then this has been attended as a self funded event. For other events e.g. Jubilee Reception & Beating the Retreat at Dover Castle, if the Mayor had a particular reason for wanting to attend then this was explained to the Leader/Chief Executive and permission to attend, using the hire car, requested.

d. Reduction in Mayor's entertainment allowance.

There is no problem working within the given budget.

Allowance mainly spent on making donations.

Also the Mayor does get a personal allowance which can be used for whatever he/she decides and so it could be used for topping up the entertainment allowance, covering some petrol cost if self driving etc

e. Any other comments.

The system works well if one works with it.

The Civic Engagement officer gives good guidance and helpful advice about appropriate engagements etc.

Important to use the in-house media team to help promote the Mayoralty/Borough by supplying them with photographs & details of events that can then be turned into appropriate media releases for the press to use.

The number of invitations received may be a reflection of how well known the Mayor is/the reputation of the Mayor.

Conclusion

20. Even before the review of the Mayoralty took place there is evidence that the cost of the Mayoralty was reducing each year. The Mayoral budget reduced from £70,781 in 2007/08 to £57,750 in 2010/11. In the full year following the changes the actual expenditure for 2011/12 was £43,225; in the same period the total number of engagements dropped from 287 to 187 and the amount of entertainment allowance spent went from £6,282 to £4,748. However it is worth noting that the number of engagements is not necessarily an indicator of the Mayor spending a lot of money, especially if most of those engagements are local, but more a measure of the demand for the Mayor to be present at events.

21. The Task Group's review of the Mayoralty aimed to reduce the cost of the Mayoralty as a contribution to the austerity measures across the council as a whole. The adopted recommendations reduced the amount of money available to the Mayoralty – by combining the Mayor's & Deputy Mayor's entertainment allowances and reducing them to £5,800 - and provided some constraints to the activities of the Mayor by restricting the events outside the borough that could be freely attended. The change from having a dedicated Mayoral car and Mayor's attendant/driver to having a hire car and driver has also had an effect both on the Mayoral budget (transport costs have continued to reduce) and on the security and civic arrangements for the Mayor.
22. However, in the opinion of the current Mayor, these conditions are not onerous and he has found no difficulty working within the guidelines and budget of the new system.
23. The Committee is asked to consider the report arising from the review recently undertaken.

Portfolio Holder's Views

24. It is appropriate timing for this review now that the new approach to our mayoralty has been in place for a year, especially having the benefit of a comparison by the current Mayor with his experiences nearly ten years ago. The paper notes several issues over the costs and arrangements involved by the Mayor in carrying out the various activities, and the views and reactions of the Committee will be most welcome, along with any recommendations for the future.

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