



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Mayoral Advisory Committee

22 March 2011

Report of the Chief Executive Officer and the Mayor's Secretary/Civic Events Officer

1. Purpose of the Briefing Note

- 1.1 To make recommendations to the Advisory Committee on any recommended changes to the Mayoralty service for 2012/2013 and beyond.

2. The Service, What it Does, What it Costs and the Benefits

- 2.1 Virtually every year there is a suggestion, usually, but not always, via the budgetary process that this Council should reduce the costs of the Mayoralty Service.
- 2.2 To date, this has been resisted but, as budget settlements get tighter, especially over the next few years, it is inevitable that more pressure will be placed on this Service.
- 2.3 It is timely to consider these issues now because the current Mayor's Secretary/Civic Events Officer has indicated that it is her intention to retire at the end of December 2011.

The Service, the staff and the Costs:

- 2.4 An analysis of the events/tasks undertaken by the current Mayor, Councillor Ian Houlder, was undertaken for the period 22 May 2010 12 February 2011.
- 2.5 During this 38 week period the Mayor averaged attending six events per week and the recorded total of events was 209. The summary of these events is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.6 Appendix 2 analyses the type and nature of the events and the duties undertaken. These were categorised into eight groups and from the Appendix 2, 29% (60 events) the largest group is '*Non Commercial Openings*'. These include, for example, the opening of events at the Art Gallery, Nowton Country Fayre, the refurbished Fire Station in Haverhill.

- 2.7 Civic/ceremonial events are the next largest group and include the Harvest Festival, which is hosted by the St Edmundsbury Borough Council and the Cathedral; Remembrance Day Services, both in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill; Royal visits would also be included in this category.
- 2.8 The third largest category is the military events. These include visits to local RAF and USAF stations, homecoming parades etc.
- 2.9 The school/colleges/young people category includes visits to schools, awards evenings, Local Democracy Week events and graduations for West Suffolk College etc.
- 2.10 Taking the four categories mentioned above, these account for approximately 75% of all of the mayoralty activities.

Staffing

- 2.11 The staffing can be split into elements. Firstly, there is the Mayor's Secretary (Mrs J Bradin) who doubles up as the Civic Events Officer as well. This latter role often takes her out of the Borough Council role into one where she is the main point of contact for the Cathedral and the variety of events that go on there. She is also the first point of contact for the County's Lieutenancy Office and many other organisations, for example, veteran groups, British Legion, youth groups. She is also the first point of contact to organise road closures etc.
- 2.12 Accompanying her is the assistant Mr I Playle. He acts as assistant and driver for the Mayor. Additionally, he acts as Sword Bearer and "usher" at meetings of Full Council.
- 2.13 Finally, in terms of staffing, there are 3 Mace Bearers.

Actual Costs 2010/2011 to February 2011

Staffing Costs

	£'000's
Mayor's Secretary/Civic Events Officer/Assistant	57.29
Mace Bearers	<u>2.35</u>
	<u>59.64</u>

Other Costs

Twinning	1.90
Mayor's Car and Garaging	7.28
Mayor Making & Dinner	4.80
Remembrance Day & Saturday & Sunday events	2.66
Civic Sunday	0.74
Homecoming Parades	13.05
Battle of Britain	2.94
Armed Forces Day	6.34
Jankyn Smythe	0.02
Harvest Festival	<u>1.99</u>
	<u>41.72</u>

Insurance, office overheads, central recharges, telephone & postage, admin, Mayor's personal allowance	<u>18.49</u>
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OVERALL TOTAL:	119.85
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A full budget breakdown is attached as Appendix 3

3. **Other Issues**

- 3.1 With the events of the year we have the option to review the relationship between Mayor and Deputy Mayor. As it stands now, the Mayor is chosen and serves his/her year and then, usually, serves as the Deputy.
- 3.2 We might want to consider reviewing this so that the Deputy Mayor is the Mayor elect.
- 3.3 Potentially, it has the advantage of allowing the Mayors to have a years "training" or induction into the role. The downside is that after the activity of the Mayoral year the outgoing Mayor has a far more abrupt exit.
- 3.4 The selection issues tied up with a 4 year election cycle remain with either system. My personal preference, having worked with both, is to have a Deputy Mayor moving to the Mayor a year later.

4. **Summary and Conclusions**

- 4.1 There is no doubt that the mayoralty/civic events service offered by the Borough Council is fully appreciated and highly valued. Equally, there is no doubt that Bury St Edmunds, as a town, with Angel Hill and, increasingly, Charter Square, lends itself to accommodating events. Residents do turn out and support events and are, generally, appreciative of these.
- 4.2 Other agencies working in the County do also appreciate the events that are hosted – the Royal Households, the County, the Cathedral, the Military and voluntary and community groups etc.
- 4.3 So I think there is little to argue about over the quality of the events and the professional ways in which they are delivered.
- 4.4 This leads me onto the question as to whether or not all of this activity is value for money?
- 4.5 There are no ways of measuring this without spending further money. You could measure it by the number of column inches in the local press; TV coverage; a reputational survey etc. I would not suggest we do this. Instead, we are able to assess the vibrancy of our town centres and how alive they are with or without these events. Speaking personally, the town centres we have (Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill) have been improved out of all recognition over the past few years.

- 4.6 Bury St Edmunds is lively. It is a place to meet socially as well as shop. It's range of facilities have been renewed and improved enormously and I do not feel this is purely due to our improved retail offer.
- 4.7 It is due to it's reputation as a centre, which is enhanced considerably by its press and TV coverage, which, in turn, adds to its reputation. It's a virtuous circle. Haverhill is at the tipping point and with the Borough's investment over the past 4 to 5 years, we are seeing a different town emerge.
- 4.8 So, in a nutshell, if we did not have what we have got we would be spending considerable sums of money to achieve it. I can think of several similar sized towns that are doing exactly that! In summary, we should protect and enhance what we have got.

5. Current Mayor's Report

- 5.1 Attached as Appendix 4 are comments on the operation of the office of Mayor by the current Mayor, Councillor Ian Houlder.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Mayoralty/Civic Events budget is not reduced for the next 5 years if, for a period of stability, to ensure that the work that is undertaken can continue to the same high professional standards.
- 6.2 That the current arrangement where the Mayor usually becomes the Deputy mayor the year after his/her official year in office is reversed so that when the Deputy Mayor is appointed he or she, in effect, is the Mayor designate for the subsequent year.

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