

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2019

OFFER OF MAYORAL HOSPITALITY

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To approve changes to 'custom and practice' relating to Mayoral hospitality.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Over the years, and in part due to the proximity of the Mayor's Parlour and Borough Theatre, 'norms' have been established regarding hospitality/receptions offered by the Mayor. The pattern of these receptions is repeated year on year often with the same groups at the same times of the year. Practices have been in place for many years, so much so that there is an expectation for this to continue without review.

2.2 The new Mayor's Parlour will be one-third smaller than the previous Mayor's Parlour.

2.3 Hospitality has not been offered during the Town Hall refurbishment works and no negative comments have been received as a result.

2.4 During these receptions in the Mayors Parlour, alcohol is served and in attendance to serve drinks is usually the Macebearer or Town Clerk.

3.0 EVIDENCE FROM OTHER LOCAL COUNCILS

3.1 The Town Clerk requested details from other larger local councils regarding the arrangements they have in place regarding Mayoral hospitality. Four Councils responded.

3.2 It appears that in the other Councils that responded, there is not the expectation to provide hospitality to the level that exists with the Mayoral office of Abergavenny Town Council. In these Councils, hospitality is very much at the discretion of the Mayor and that when organisations are invited to a reception with the Mayor only tea & coffee and soft drinks are served.

3.3 All of the four Councils that responded serve alcohol but on a very limited number of occasions each year such as after the Remembrance Service and prior to the Christmas Lights Switch On.

4.0 PROPOSED CHANGES TO MAYORAL HOSPITALITY

4.1 It is proposed that hospitality continues to be offered to organisations where the Mayor is the Patron and where there are strong partnership links between

organisations and with the Council. Hospitality will also be offered to guests from the towns of Beaupreau and Ostringen and similar.

- 4.2 However, the fundamental change proposed is that **the offer of hospitality will be at the discretion of the Mayor**. This is adopting a more proactive approach rather than continuing with the current reactive situation where Town Council officers are being told by organisations what the Mayor should be providing as “it’s always been that way” with the undercurrent of causing upset should arrangements change.
- 4.3 Although there may be occasions when it could be argued that it would be appropriate to serve alcohol at Mayoral receptions, setting out when alcohol would be offered and when it would not introduce subjectively and could lead to criticism of unfair treatment. It is much fairer and simpler to adopt the approach that **alcohol is not served at any Mayoral reception**. In consideration of this matter, Councillors should consider whether the purchase of alcohol constitutes an appropriate use of public money and whether they would be able to justify this expenditure to a ‘person on the street’.
- 4.4 Before the new Mayor’s Parlour is completed, all organisations that routinely received Mayoral hospitality will be contacted and the new arrangements clearly set out. An example of hospitality that would continue would be Abergavenny & Beaupreau Twinning Association AGM. Examples of hospitality that would cease would be AAODS production and Annual Meeting of the KHS Former Pupils Association. No doubt, there will be some organisations that will be resistant to this change however, the majority of local Councils in Wales manage to have excellent relationships with community organisations without having to offer the level of hospitality expected in Abergavenny and without offering alcohol.
- 4.5 The Town Clerk will liaise with the range of organisations to consider whether there are alternative ways in which the Mayor/Town Council and the organisation in question can develop a good relationship.
- 4.6 A reduction in Mayoral receptions decreases the necessary attendance by the Macebearer/Town Clerk.
- 4.7 There may be opportunities for some of the organisations previously offered hospitality to be invited to the annual Community Dinner.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 To approve the following:
- Alcohol is not served during Mayoral receptions

- To accept that hospitality is at the discretion of the Mayor and will be at significantly reduced level to previous years