



The Fellowship of Clerks of Livery Companies of the City of London

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The City of London Livery Clerk

Role

All Livery Companies and Guilds in the City of London employ a Clerk. The Clerk is the General Manager or Chief Operating Officer of the Company and is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Company and its activities. The Company or Guild is managed by a governing body called 'The Court'. This body is the equivalent of a board of directors, the Chairman equivalent is the annually elected Master, sometimes called the Prime Warden or Upper Bailiff. The remaining Court members are elected Wardens, from whom the future Masters are usually chosen, a group of Court Assistants below the chair and a group of most recent Past Masters. Most Courts consist of 25 ~ 35 members. The Clerk serves at the Court's pleasure and reports to the Court as a whole.

Duties

Broadly the Clerk performs three distinct areas of contractual responsibility:

Administration

Finance: The Clerk most often is the bookkeeper undertaking financial record keeping, banking, payments, budgets, VAT accounting and quarterly financial reporting to the Court. The Clerk is often supported by a Hon. Treasurer (or Finance Chairman) on the Court who will oversee or approve expenses, event budgets, annual budget and annual report and accounts.

General Administration: Communications with Members and the Court, maintain Member database and correspondence records, Court agendas and minutes, communications with the City of London, the Livery Committee and Mansion House. Communications with other Livery Companies and the Fellowship of Clerks. Management of supplies, services including insurance, inventory (treasures, gowns, etc.), equipment and facilities.

The Clerk usually employs a Beadle to serve the Company and ensures he is fully briefed. The Clerk normally provides support for Court Committees including Membership, Finance and any Craft/Trade/Professional Committees. The Clerk is usually required to attend these Committee

meetings to ensure that activities are known about, and to give advice. The Clerk should generally avoid becoming the Secretariat for these Committees responsible for agenda, minutes and general organising. This represents a large amount of additional work and should be handled by volunteer Liverymen.

The Clerk maintains and issues a Livery List of Members and updates the Common Hall Electoral Register with the City to ensure that Liverymen are able to vote at the two annual civic elections (Sheriffs and Lord Mayor).

PA to the Master

The Clerk fulfils the role of Personal Assistant to the Master and manages all invitations, appointments, RSVP responses, pour memoire, dress code, location and travel arrangements if required. The Clerk will accompany the Master to dinners and luncheons if invited, presentations, lectures and briefings.

The Clerk works at least a full year ahead with the incoming Master to establish formal event dates, venue bookings and catering arrangements. A record must be kept of all the Master's event attendances as he or she represent the Company for a regular report out to the Court; the Clerk publishes an annual calendar of events for all Members.

Event management

The Clerk is responsible for the smooth organisation and running of the Company's formal events including livery dinners, the annual installation of officers and any annual or civic banquet.

The Clerk, in conjunction with the Master, will have identified and sent invitations to visiting Masters, Military affiliates and other dignitaries within the Company's budget. This needs to be done several months prior to the event.

Having a booked venue and date the Clerk obtains menu and wines choices, determines the selections and finalises all costs with the venue (stirrup cup, loving cup, candelabra, use of piano, etc). An event budget is prepared in order to identify a ticket charge to cover costs.

The Clerk prepares an event notice and booking form to be issued to members 6 weeks prior; then bookings, diet requests and payment arrangements are collected to provide final numbers a week before the event.

The Clerk is responsible for issuing pour memoire invitations, preparing a table plan, production of a menu card including the event programme (speeches, running order), production of place cards and table plan copies to assist guests. Ideally the Clerk will conduct a 'walk-through' of the venue prior to the event with the Hall Manager (with or without the Master) to establish final arrangements (receiving line position, Court room layout, arrangements for admission candidates, entertainment arrangements, etc.).

The Clerk should prepare a detailed schedule of events for the evening to assist the Beadle, the Caterer, the Master and Speakers to keep to time. Most

halls must be vacated promptly by 23:00 and additional charges can be incurred for an overrun.

Membership

The Clerk is responsible for ensuring the proper behaviour of all members and their guests at formal events. This includes dress codes, language and sobriety. The reputation and dignity of the Company relies on being well represented by its members. The Clerk must deal with any disciplinary issues that might rarely arise.

The Clerk holds a very special authority within the Company and can be of significant influence on prospective members who are considering applying for the freedom of the Company. Any effort that the Clerk provides in supporting the Membership Committee in this endeavour will be enormously valuable.

Other Company Activities that the Clerk is drawn into

Every Livery Company undertakes and participates in numerous additional activities which the Clerk is inevitably drawn into. Such activities are the Master's annual Weekend, other social events and outings, professional or craft/trade development events, Inter-Livery events entry and organisation if sponsored, common hall election/United Guild Service bookings and lunch arrangements. Clerks are able to offer advice to Organisers, prepare and distribute notices, take bookings, collect payments and provide menus, place cards, etc. using Company resources. These activities represent another significant amount of work and the Clerk should limit involvement where possible

Charitable Fund Trustees and Grantmaking activities

Every Livery Company operates a charitable trust funded by members' contributions, investment income and fundraising. Normally a separate entity governed by a board of Trustees and chaired by a Court member. The Clerk is frequently engaged to be the Secretary to the Trustees and provides admin support. This role can also include the charity fund bookkeeping, banking, the HMRC Gift Aid annual claim and keeping track of donations. If the Clerk is engaged for this additional role then there should be a separate time commitment and associated remuneration within the overall employment.

Types of Clerkship

The post of Clerk varies enormously from the part-time, working from home type, to the senior Clerk or Chief Executive of a Great Twelve or a major Hall-owning Company. In between are full or part-time Clerks working out of a City office that may or may not be housed in one of the 40 Livery Halls.

Some Clerks work entirely alone (usually part-time from home) and they are usually under-paid for the hours that they need to work in order to properly manage the Company. This is usually due to the circumstance that whilst the Company generates a heavy Clerkship work load due to the level of activity, the Company simply cannot afford to pay full time competitive salary without causing the members' quarterage charge to be too high.

Total remuneration

For those Clerks employed part-time but working excess hours in order to properly and fully manage the affairs of the Company; it is generally accepted that there is a benefit in kind received. These benefits include the status of the role, the desirable and sought-after position, hosted at company and guest dinners, luncheons, lectures and other important occasions. In most cases a level of expenses can be claimed, although not generally for commuting or overnight stay costs. The Fellowship undertakes regular salary and working condition surveys amongst Clerks. Most Clerks are now employed as opposed to self-employed on a contractual basis. This means that benefits are paid including pension contributions.

The Governing Court

A Livery Company or Guild is governed by a Court of Assistants as described in the 'Role' section above. The Clerk acts as Secretary to the Court and prepares the agenda (in conjunction with the Master, Wardens and Committee Chairmen), and publishes accurate minutes of the proceedings. The Clerk is also often responsible for gathering or preparing Court papers prior to each meeting; these include quarterly financials, membership status, committee reports, affiliation reports and any important City or any relevant craft/trade/profession information. Ideally the Clerk should ensure that the Court meeting papers and regalia are fully prepared before Court members arrive so that there is free time for them to discuss matters or seek guidance or advice from the Clerk.

The Clerk is a very important figure in the Company, he or she will be the continuity, often the guardian of the Company's culture and certainly the keeper of its good reputation and status within the Livery and the City. However, the Clerk must never forget that he or she is the servant of the Company and not the ruler. At all times the proper respect must be shown to the Master, the Wardens and the Court of Assistants for whom they serve.

Information Distribution

Clerks are inundated with email messages and posted mail; communications are received from member enquiries, charities seeking grants, merchants selling wares, public bodies, livery and inter-livery events, Mansion House and the City of London Corporation. In the interests of minimising messages to members, the Clerk should scrutinize all information and forward on only those messages that are legitimate and useful. Included within the key

information to be advised to all members are the Livery Committee quarterly briefings, Common Hall election candidate and procedural information, inter-livery event announcements, information from the Pan Livery Initiative Communications and Philanthropy groups, Lord Mayor's Appeal information, and charity information limited to the Sheriffs' & Recorder's Fund and perhaps the British Red Cross who are active with the Livery. If a Clerk is in doubt then he or she can consult with the Company Court or the Fellowship.

Discipline

Livery Companies operate to very high standards of professional and personal conduct. Strict standards of behaviour are expected, a certain protocol followed and adherence to dress codes at all company events. Occasionally, there may arise a disciplinary matter concerning a member who displays behaviour unbecoming, inappropriate language, or disrespect liable to bring the Company into disrepute. It is the Clerk's job to sort out the matter and put a stop to the concern.

Questions concerning these guidance notes may be directed to the author at the contact details above.

David Barrett
Secretary
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