

This note is one of a series placed in the Almanac for the guidance of livery masters, wardens, and their clerks, especially new ones, seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them. Most are written by a past chairman of the Livery Committee, of whom you may read more at the foot of the Contact page.

### **Sheriffs attending (eg) a livery dinner in a private capacity**

I recently received this question:

*“I’m looking for guidance on the protocol for when a Sheriff books and pays to come to an event as a member, not as an official guest.”*

This was my answer:

I think there are two possible answers to your question – the first may be the more correct, in terms of protocol etc, whilst the second (in my view) maybe the better, and more pragmatic. I’m assuming, btw, that the event in question is a formal dinner or similar, not some more low-key event.

So, if the sheriff is attending in a private capacity, and NOT as the sheriff, then he should be treated exactly as any other guest or member of the company. So no inclusion in allocution, VIP procession into the dining room, and only a brief reference (maybe) in welcoming speeches – “and we are also delighted to welcome our own liveryman (past master?) and currently sheriff, John Smith, here tonight in a private capacity”.

Importantly, and perhaps contentiously, in this scenario the sheriff would not wear his badge.

However all this seems a shame, and with the agreement of your master (first) and then the sheriff (second) it would be sensible (in my view) to treat him as a guest of the company, even if he/she is paying for their own ticket. A precedent for this approach is when a liveryman invites the master of another livery as his personal guest to a dinner, and it is pragmatically and often decided to treat that master as a company guest, albeit of maybe lesser precedence than the company’s official guests.

Pride maybe one of the deadly sins, but realistically your livery will be understandably proud to have their own sheriff present, and the Sheriff will be proud to be acknowledged as such. So I’d go for the second option.

Three final thoughts – the sheriff himself may have reasons why he wishes to fly under the radar, though this seems unlikely. Second, re seat plan, I would not place him/her above the Club’s official guests in the placement. And I don’t think this guidance would change if the event was held outside the City boundary.

Nigel R Pullman

5th December 2025

Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email [nrpullman@btinternet.com](mailto:nrpullman@btinternet.com)