

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those 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.

## **How to become the Lord Mayor?**

### **A simple guide.**

There is much formal guidance around on this topic, and any serious aspirant would do well to seek an early meeting with a senior member of the Court of Aldermen (the Court), who are best placed to advise, and are willing and ready to do so.

But this note is aimed at those (maybe more junior) liverymen who see the Mansion House as some more distant ambition.

**Qualification.** There are two essential qualifications to become Lord Mayor (LM). First, you need to be an alderman, elected to represent one of the 25 wards of the City. And second you must have served the office of Sheriff.

If you not sure what an aldermen or sheriff does, or how they are elected, you need to do some homework, either elsewhere at this site, or at the City of London website, or better, by meeting current or past incumbents, possibly from within your own livery.

**Age.** The lower age limit to be an alderman is 21, but the upper is 70. So as you must be an alderman to serve LM, you will need to be under 70. In practice most LM's are between 55-65, though there are plenty of exceptions. The role is full time, so as younger aldermen are likely to be in paid employment, this presents a potential problem for someone in, say, their 40's. At the other end of the spectrum, the Court expect past LM's to continue to play an active role in support of the mayoralty for maybe five or so more years, and hence the preference to have served as LM before around 65.

**Time.** As mentioned above, the job of LM is full time, but there will be substantial time demands not just for the single year in office. Service on the Court will involve many duties during the working day (though no longer the obligation to sit as a JP) and evenings, and this will normally go on for at least five years as a junior alderman. Prior to being eligible to be elected LM, as mentioned you will have served as Sheriff, and this too is a full time role, for a year.

Hence the time commitment required in the years leading to, and including, the Mansion House is considerable. This tends to mean successful aspirants will be sufficiently senior in their profession to control their own diaries, or be semi-retired, or self employed. But the Privileges Committee of the Court, the body that nominates those deemed suitable to stand for election (as sheriff or LM) much prefer aldermen

in successful, preferably finance/business related, senior careers. So those with plenty of time on their hands are unlikely to be successful!

**Lord Mayor - Job Description and Person Specification.** This may be read at <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-the-city/how-we-make-decisions/Documents/Lord-Mayor-Job-Description.pdf>

**Progression through the Court.** The Court now have no influence on who is elected an alderman, though they can encourage candidates to stand when vacancies occur. The vote is entirely in the hands of the electorate. But once an alderman, the Court has almost unfettered ability to select and promote whichever of its members it considers suitable for advancement, to both sheriff and LM (indeed that is part of the role of the Court). It does this by a formal system of interview and appraisal, with outside senior people sitting on the panels. The election by the livery on Michaelmas Day is largely approbation and a ceremonial endorsement.

A significant number of successfully elected aldermen will NOT go forward to become LM for one reason or another, and a minority of aldermanic sheriffs will sometimes not progress to Mansion House either. There is no longer Buggins turn.

**Cost.** It is no longer the case that a prerequisite of becoming the LM is great wealth. Assuming a successful and decently rewarded career in the preferred fields of business or finance, and assuming some reasonable savings have been put aside, then becoming LM will be within the budget of many professional people towards the end of their working lives.

Exact figures are not available, but it should be born in mind that the costs will accrue over the years in a number of ways. There are costs associated in being an alderman. There are further significant costs whilst a sheriff. And then again when LM. On the plus side, many of the expenses traditionally associated with the role are now paid out of City Cash (the non rate-payer funded part of the City's finances). When exceptionally high figures are quoted, this writer suspects that there is a hefty element of notional "lost earnings" in the calculation.

But of course there are expenses, and it would be a foolish person who did not realise that, akin to owning a boat, or going on exotic hols, good things cost money.

**How to get started.** This site (and paper) is aimed at liverymen, so it is assumed the reader is already a member of a livery company. The next step would be to join a Ward Club, either one in which you have a local interest, or one which you may wish to represent, as an Alderman or Common Councilman (CC). Some take the view that being elected a CC is a preferred precursor to becoming an alderman. It is not required in law, but may be in practice (though none of the recent three LM's were ever CC). Whether in your livery, ward club, the Court of CC, or myriad other City institutions and charities, you will need to become actively involved, seek office, and be seen to be the sort of person who can make a contribution, with leadership ability.

**General.** The position of Lord Mayor of London may be considered the pinnacle of any liverymen's civic career. But though only a tiny number will aspire to it, for those who do, it will be a long (in years) and demanding (in time and money) challenge. It will require robust good health and energy, a 100% supportive spouse/partner, and an out-going and ambitious personality. It will not be easy to get there, and once elected, it will be very hard work. All say it was worth it!

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