

# CABINET

## Civic Programme 2009/10

17<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### Report of Head of Democratic Services

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Cabinet of options for reducing expenditure on the Civic Programme in 2009/10.

Key Decision

Non-Key Decision

Referral from Officer

X

This report is public

#### OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Cabinet consider the options for reducing the budget allocated to the Civic Programme for 2009/10 and future years
- (2) That subject to the above the Head of Financial Services be authorised to update the General Fund Revenue Account in 2009/10 as appropriate.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Democratic Services budget includes a sum of £12,700 for Civic receptions and Mayoral Functions.
- 1.2 This budget covers the cost of all annual events in the Civic Programme, any one-off events such as Freedom Marches and also any incidental costs relating to the Mayoralty such as attending the Royal Garden Party, adding new names on Memorials, repairs to the Mayoral Chain, advertising for Marsh Grass payments to Freeman, for example. It is also used in different ways by each Mayor to provide refreshments for guests invited to the Town Hall during their Mayoral year.
- 1.3 In addition there is a separate budget of £2,300 for floral decorations at civic events.
- 1.4 The annual civic events paid for from this budget are currently as follows:

January	Holocaust Memorial Service
March	Reception for Parish Councils
	Mayoral At Homes
	Visit by Lancashire Civic Heads
May	Annual Council
	Mayor's Sunday
July	Freeman's Court
October	Reception for Overseas Students
November	Remembrance Sunday

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 Consideration has been given to ways in which expenditure in this area could be reduced either permanently or as a one-off for 2009/10 to ease the current budget situation. The exact saving for each event is difficult to determine as each year the Mayor is consulted on their preferences and expenditure varies according to their priorities.
- 2.2 It should be noted that whilst each event does not have a specific separate allocation of funding as this varies according to the decisions of each year's Mayor, the budget is monitored throughout the year to ensure that there is no overspend, and any savings at the end of the year fall into balances.

## **3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

### **3.1 Visit by Civic Heads of Lancashire**

Option 1 – not to hold the event at all, producing a saving of at least £500. The content of the event is personal to each Mayor and the event in 2008 cost over £900 due to the requirement to hire a coach.

Option 2 - to hold a small scale event based in Lancaster Town Hall comprising an afternoon reception with tea and coffee and a tour of the building. This could be run on similar lines to the reception for overseas students held in 2008, tying in a tourism presentation to publicise the district.

### **3.2 Annual Council**

Option 1 – Not to hold a celebratory reception at the end of the Annual Council meeting. This would produce a saving in excess of £3,000.

Option 2 – To reduce the number of guests being invited to a reception on the same basis as in previous years, eg a three course lunch. Reducing the number of invitees by half would produce a saving of over £1,500. A separate report on the Lancaster Town Hall Centenary celebrations for 2009 has already identified that a reduction in the number of guests would produce a saving which could then be utilised to enhance the Heritage and Lancaster Unlocked weekends.

Option 3 – To set a total budget allocation for this event, say £1,000 or £2,000 and with the agreement of the Mayor choose a reduced level of catering, e.g a buffet rather than a served meal. Numbers would be invited according to the budget allocation.

### **3.3 Attendance at the Royal Garden Party in London**

The City Council applies annually for the full allocation of four places to attend the Royal Garden Parties in London in July. The City Council at present pays for a short break to London for the four guests, usually the Mayor and Mayoress/Consort and the Deputy Mayor and their Mayoress/Escort. The cost of the break includes hotel accommodation and rail travel and in 2008 cost the City Council £683.03. The Council then also covers the cost of food and travel (eg taxi fares) whilst in London, raising the cost of this to approximately £840.

Option 1 – that the City Council applies for the allocation of 4 tickets to enable attendance at the Royal Garden Party in London, but that the cost of attending is covered by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from within their allocated Mayoral Allowances should they wish to attend.

Option 2 - that the City Council does not apply for the allocation of tickets and is not represented at the Royal Garden Party in London.

### **3.4 Floral Decorations**

The budget for floral decorations, currently estimated at £2,300 for the 2009/2010 financial year could be deleted. Limited floral decoration could be provided from the remaining Civic Receptions and Mayoral Functions budget allocation for specific events where required.

### **4.0 Officer Preferred Option**

4.1 There is no officer preferred option. Members need to understand however that this budget has been substantially reduced over the years and all events reviewed to ensure that they provide value for money. It would not be possible to continue to provide the same level of events at reduced costs. Savings can be made, but only by cutting a specific event or making major alterations to events.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 The civic programme has been extensively reviewed in the past few years by means of both a Civic Task Group which reported to Council and an Internal Audit of the Service as a result of which the list of civic events set out in 1.4 above has been agreed as providing a reasonable level of civic hospitality at the least expenditure.

5.2 Given the financial position for 2009/10, consideration has been given to where further cuts could be made. Cancelling specific events would produce savings or set out in 3.0 above are suggestions where reductions could be made without reducing the Mayoral profile.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The proposal to deliver a civic programme which celebrates our local heritage and benefits our communities is included as part of Priority Outcome 16 in the 2008/09 Corporate Plan - to work to maintain a cohesive community where respect for all is valued and celebrated.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Democratic Services budget includes a sum of £12,700 for Civic receptions and Mayoral Functions and £2,300 for floral decorations.

The possible savings as a result of each option are set out in the report. It should be noted that another report on this agenda suggests the use of some savings to the Civic Programme to fund additional expenditure on refreshments for town hall tours, as part of the Lancaster Town Hall Centenary programme of events. Subject to member decision the 2009/10 (and possible future years) draft budget will be updated accordingly.

**DEPUTY SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

In reaching a decision, Members are advised to consider the options in context of the budget position and the need to make ongoing savings and achieve value for money, as well as proposed priorities and the impact on service users.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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