BULLETIN FROM THE RT HON THE LORD MAYOR

24 June 2020

Fellow Liverymen

Ordinarily at this time of Midsummer the Livery would be assembling in Common Hall to choose "two fit and able persons to be Sheriffs of this City for the year ensuing", as the Common Cryer and Serjeant-at-Arms traditionally proclaims at the opening of proceedings. The COVID19 emergency has denied us the opportunity to gather in our usual way, but I am delighted that our two excellent Sheriffs, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli and Chris Hayward, will continue in office for a further year. They have been hugely energetic and supportive colleagues and I look forward to working alongside them for this additional period.

In this latest bulletin I particularly wish to update you on several issues with which we will all be much preoccupied in the coming months.

The recent death of George Floyd in the United States has shocked and saddened all of us. The response it has provoked in the US, in the UK and around the world, and the momentum that has been generated behind the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrates a real determination for change. You may have seen that the City of London Corporation has issued a public statement condemning racism in which we re-iterate our solidarity with BAME communities everywhere and our commitment to fulfilling our responsibility to create a fair and inclusive society.

The Corporation has also established a Tackling Racism Working Party to consider what we are doing to address racism in all its forms and across all aspects of our work. The Working Party will assess whether the Corporation could take any further action to promote economic, educational and social

inclusion, as well as respond to historical issues, such as statues and monuments. The Working Party will build on the activity we are already undertaking to improve diversity and to drive inclusion. More information on these commitments can be found here: https://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/city-corporation-sets-up-working-party-to-tackle-racism/

I believe strongly that this is an issue to which all parts of society must give urgent consideration as part of a mature and thoughtful discussion about how we can make the UK a fair and inclusive place for everyone.

The Corporation continues to work on supporting its communities during the Coronavirus crisis and on understanding the needs of City businesses. With our Policy Chair, Catherine McGuinness, I have been undertaking a Virtual Engagement Programme with chief executives of major employers and investors, including key partners overseas. My Virtual Visits have allowed me to "travel" to Beijing, Mumbai and Melbourne and yet be back in my office by lunchtime!

As we begin to see the lockdown restrictions being relaxed, we are especially focussed on the return to work. The overwhelming majority of firms of all sizes in the City, including the resident Livery companies, have been able to work from home during the lockdown. This trend is likely to persist, as companies have been satisfied with how they have been able to conduct business remotely. Businesses also want to be confident that public transport will be safe and efficient, and that office accommodation is appropriately adapted for social distancing, before staff are required to return to the office. We have been having extensive conversations with business on these issues, and while we are already beginning to see the workforce in the Square Mile grow, firms have indicated that the return to work will be gradual. Few anticipate having more than 40% of their staff physically in the office before the autumn.

We are particularly keen to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the City's SMEs, who do so much to drive London's economic vibrancy and reputation for innovation. We have put in place measures to support smaller businesses, including applying business rates relief.

There will also be some changes to the City's streetscape, to provide more space for walking and cycling. This will likely include closing some streets to vehicle traffic and reallocating carriageways for pedestrians and queueing. We hope that these changes will help to keep the Square Mile open for business

and prepared for the repositioned normality of life after the immediate crisis has passed.

I continue to be grateful for the feedback and input I have been receiving from the Livery at this time. It is clear that you too are giving much thought to the challenges we are facing and putting in place preparations for the future. You have also been doing much to support our most vulnerable and needy through extended and imaginative voluntary and charitable activities. The Livery is a critical component of the City's communities and I have been pleased to be able to discuss these issues with masters and clerks in my series of virtual coffee mornings, which began this month.

Some key messages from those conversations include:

- 72 Livery Companies have signed up to the London Funders COVID19 statement and I would urge those who have not yet done so to add their names.
- Please continue to let us know about your charitable and voluntary initiatives via email to LMProgOffice@cityoflondon.gov.uk
- Our planning continues for a Lord Mayor's Show in November and we look forward to sharing with you in due course more details of what will be a Lord Mayor's Show like no other.

I look forward to speaking to you again about these key issues - COVID19, plans for the recovery, diversity, and what the future might hold - in my next message to you before the summer break.

There is much to be done. As we reflect this Midsummer on what the year has brought us so far, I thank the Livery in advance for the part I know that you will play in supporting me, the Sheriffs and the City of London during the second half of 2020.

With renewed good wishes from me and the Lady Mayoress.

Alderman William Russell
The Rt Hon the Lord Mayor

The Lord Mayor takes part in a COVID19 testing trial at Legal & General, as companies prepare to return staff safely to the office.