

MMXIX CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. 80% of the City Corporation's members represent mainly business voters, who are a small (and not necessarily representative) sample of people working within the City's boundaries. City workers typically don't know or care about the City Corporation. **Is the City Corporation democratic?**

No.

2. A significant part of the financial City lies outside the City's boundaries: banks and professional services firms in Canary Wharf, and fund managers in Mayfair. There are no business voters in these places, or in any other financial centre, like New York. No-one complains that the absence of business voters in these places affects business. **So why are business voters needed within the City's boundaries?**

I've never seen this question answered.

3. **Which of these elections is more democratic: the Lord Mayor of the City of London or the President of Zimbabwe?**

The President of Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, votes are actually cast (although miscounted); there may be a rival candidate; and ordinary people are eligible to vote. In the City, none of these things apply. The only persons eligible to elect the Lord Mayor are members of livery companies, which are private clubs that can generally only be joined through relatives or knowing the right people.

4. The second toast in City banquets is to "other members of the Royal family". **In the light of recent events, will the wording be changed?**

No. I expect the City Corporation hopes this storm will blow over, and will in time be forgotten. That's how it deals with its own crises. The survival of the institution comes before principles.

5. The City Corporation proposes to expand its own City of London School for Girls notwithstanding multiple promises previously made by the school governors and Corporation not to expand the school further; lack of a strategic development plan; the architectural damage that will be done to the Grade II* listed Barbican estate (Park and Garden) and Grade II buildings; and the adverse effect on some of its residents. **Will this proposed expansion receive planning permission from the Corporation's own planning committee?**

Yes, of course it will. The planning committee has never in recent years refused permission to a development by the City Corporation, or any other major developer, even if the application fails to comply with planning law. The circle is squared by claiming that planning considerations are outweighed by ~~political expediency~~ "public benefit" (often hard to discern). Since members representing (notional) business voters are in a majority on this committee, the fact that a development will blight the lives of City residents can be ignored in a way it could not in any other local authority.

6. **Can a resident member have a "pecuniary interest" in a tree owned by a local authority, and so be prevented from voting on whether that tree is felled, which affects scores of the member's constituents as much as, or more than, the member?**

Yes, according to a decision made by the City Corporation's standards committee in January.

7. **Which author could have saved himself the trouble of devising the plot of his most famous novel if he had read an account of a case handled by the standards committee last year?**

Kafka.



MMXIX CHRISTMAS QUIZ



8. The membership of the Guildhall Club is restricted to current and some former members of the City Corporation, and a few other people in senior City roles. For no subscription, members have the use of a large bar and dining room in the Guildhall at subsidised prices, and at no cost for three course lunches served before or after committee meetings. **What six figure sum does the City Corporation pay out of "City Cash" every year to subsidise the Guildhall Club?**

That sum is confidential. Its disclosure would be a breach of the members' code of conduct, and result in "standards" proceedings being brought against the member disclosing it. Voters are not entitled to know about the funding of the benefits enjoyed by the members they voted for.

9. The City Corporation allows its premises to be used, free of charge, for meetings by an organisation that excludes women from its membership. **Is it acceptable for a public authority to act in this way?**

There are more freemasons among members of the City Corporation (just over a quarter) than women. Whether the masonic principles of secrecy, hierarchy and brotherhood affect the culture of the Corporation as a public authority, where openness and accountability are key principles, is hard to tell. But it's certainly not acceptable for a public authority to allow its premises to be used, even for payment, for meetings by an organisation that excludes women. It has been argued that women members can form their own lodge (and women masons do exist, but aren't officially recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England, because they aren't men). The same concept of "separate development" underpinned apartheid. It isn't a good argument for a public authority to use.

10. **What is the difference, in principle, between the City's role in the appeasement of (a) Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and (b) the People's Republic of China in the 2010s?**

None. In the 1930s, Germany's economic advancement was admired, and it wasn't politic to draw attention to the "internal" issue of the treatment of Jews. In the 2010s, China's economic advancement is admired, and it isn't politic to draw attention to "internal" issues concerning the Uighurs, Tibet, Taiwan (which was excluded from participation in the last Lord Mayor's Show) and Hong Kong. The City is proud of its history, but doesn't learn from it.

11. These questions make the case for the dis-aggregation or abolition of the City Corporation's disparate functions of being a local authority, representative of the financial sector, regulator of the livery, major charity, subsidised private club and freemasons' meeting place. **Will its members agree to this, i.e. do turkeys vote for Christmas?**

No, they don't. But in reality, turkeys don't decide their fate. It is decided for them. One day, the City Corporation's fate will be decided for it from the outside. In the meantime, its members can aspire to be more than turkeys.

12. **Should a complaint be made against the member who wrote this quiz for a breach of paragraph 2(m) of the member's' code of conduct, namely, bringing his office into disrepute?**

Perhaps the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee will make the complaint at the urging of the Chair of the Establishment Committee.

13. The City Corporation's communications department talks about the Corporation's "brand", as if the Corporation were a profit-making business. That being so, the Corporation should avoid misleading advertising. **Should its motto be changed, for accuracy, from "Domine dirge nos" to "Pecunia dirige nos"?**

What do you think?


