



Japan Local Government Centre, London

Monthly Report for December 2010 (UK) – 2012 Civic Honours Competition

Background

The granting of city status and the office of Lord Mayoralty for a UK local authority is a power in the gift of the reigning monarch. Traditionally the granting of such civic status, either as a city or a borough, took place according to the strategic interests of the Crown, such as a town's prominence in political, commercial, military or ecclesiastical affairs. The historical grant and privilege of city status under this chartered process is common among the monarchical societies of Northern Europe. In more recent times however, the process has been undertaken by competition, usually to mark special events such as a Royal Jubilee anniversary or the Millennium.

The grant of city status and that of Lord Mayoralty, under letters patent, are purely honorific and confer no additional powers, functions or funding. There is no requirement for a Local Authority to have an Anglican cathedral or be of a certain population size, contrary to popular belief in the UK.

There are 66 cities in the UK: 50 in England, five in Wales, six in Scotland and five in Northern Ireland (out of 406 local authorities at the non-county tier). If an English Local Authority with city status is reorganised or abolished, its Royal charter can continue either with the creation of a parish council within the area or the appointment of Charter Trustees from among the members of the new authority.

2012 Civic Honours Competition

In December 2010 the Cabinet Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, as lead departments for Honours and Ceremonial affairs and the Diamond Jubilee respectively, announced the criteria for the competition among local authorities for the granting of one new city and one new Lord Mayoralty (or Lord Provostship in Scotland) to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Any local authority may apply to become a city but the Lord Mayoralty or Provostship is limited to existing cities of at least 15 years' standing. Only a Local Authority may apply for the honours using the government's outlined process, rather than any public nomination. The Local Authority may be from any part of the United Kingdom. Declared applicants for city status include Medway (which contains the former city of Rochester), Middlesbrough and Reading.

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The decision on awarding the honours will be taken by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister under the Royal Prerogative. The entries will be assessed by Deputy Prime Minister and Lord President of the Council, assisted by the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform, who will also consult the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (who is responsible for coordinating the Government's involvement in the Diamond Jubilee) and, if appropriate, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Any comments which the devolved administrations may wish to make on the applications from the relevant countries will be taken into account. The results of the competition will then be announced by the Government in early 2012.

It was announced in January 2010 that the London Borough of Greenwich would become the country's fourth Royal Borough to mark the occasion, on account of its royal heritage as the birthplace of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I and site of the Royal Arsenal and Royal Naval College. The other existing Royal Boroughs in London are Kensington and Chelsea and Kingston upon Thames, while Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire is also styled a Royal Borough. Again, the royal prefix carries no legal significance but does guarantee the local authority some higher precedence with the monarch and Buckingham Palace.

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