



Guidance on Affordability for High Sheriffs in Nomination

Not surprisingly one of the first questions that is often asked by potential High Sheriff candidates on being approached by the nomination panel is “what does it cost and how much time is involved?” It is therefore important for the High Sheriffs' Association to spread good practice, dispel myths and encourage the widest possible selection of candidates, while at the same time ensuring that the dignity of this ancient office is upheld.

Nomination Panels will take into consideration a potential High Sheriff's ability to carry out a role that is demanding in time, and for which there are no resources to defray any costs. While it is the case that every High Sheriff will incur expenditure during his or her year in office, the High Sheriffs' Association Council is strongly of the view that this should not be excessive. The role is an entirely voluntary one with the costs being borne by the High Sheriff himself or herself.

Time is always going to be an issue, particularly for those still in active employment but you should always resist the pressure to do as much or even more than your predecessor as, unlike the Lord-Lieutenant, the High Sheriff has no deputy and attending or participating in a few key events in the county can often have as much impact as attending several. You should remember you have been nominated for the talents you will bring to the office and not to replicate what has gone before or to adhere rigidly to county tradition.

For those nominated it is sensible to have practical discussion early in nomination on a county by county basis on topics such as dress, printing, stationery, transport, entertainment, events, venues, catering, etc. This might usefully be done in relaxed circumstances at the High Sheriffs' Association's Regional meeting held in each area.

In order to stimulate debate and to “widen the net” and provide practical advice, a survey of members of the High Sheriffs' Association (particularly recent past High Sheriffs) was recently conducted seeking practical tips and advice on how to reduce and manage the cost of holding office. That advice has been collated below in order to assist debate and to dispel certain myths and while the list is not exhaustive we hope you find it useful as you consider and then prepare for office.

Administration

An effective way of keeping administrative costs to a minimum is to do it all in house yourself or by harnessing members of your family for specific tasks. Early planning for your year and any key events you might hold will also help spread the load, avoiding the need to hire extra administrative assistance. Diary management is critical as with



invitations arriving on a daily basis by post, email and telephone it would otherwise be easy to forget an event. For general invitations you receive by email, it is often useful to print and file in date order.

Database

A good database of contacts including email and postal addresses and titles is essential and is best prepared over a long period, and if possible with the support of the incumbent High Sheriff, in order that you are up and running in good time for your declaration ceremony. If you are not good on a computer it is worth seeking advice as with a good database of contacts, you can print invitations and envelopes or send email invitations by mail merge. The same spreadsheet can be used to collate replies and any other issues regarding the management of guests.

Invitations

It is now quite possible to print good quality invitations at home should you wish to send traditional invitations, although nowadays email invitations are considered quite acceptable and are widely used.

Printing

Most inkjet and black and white laser printers are relatively inexpensive and if you are purchasing a new printer it is worth checking that it will take stiff card. The same printer can be used to produce your own letterheads and compliment slips on good quality paper with the High Sheriffs' Association's badge or your own arms or crest, thereby saving on professional printing charges.

Postage

For letters and traditional invitations, it is worth stocking up on a good supply of 2nd class stamps to avoid future increased postal charges. If you have contacts with a company that has a franking machine they may be prepared to let you pay them to frank large runs of correspondence (turn off their company logo first) where the saving on normal postal rates can be substantial.

Email

Correspondence by email is now quite acceptable and can be personalised by adding an electronic signature and the High Sheriffs' Association's badge or your own arms or crest. There are also a number of online websites such as www.paperlesspost.com which will send electronic invitations, manage replies and even send reminders to those who forget to reply. Where a letter is preferred it is also possible that this can be emailed as an attachment, thereby saving on postage. However, it must be said that a hand-written or "top and tailed" letter of thanks is usually much appreciated.

Court dress/uniform

It is perfectly normal to seek a "previously worn" shrieval court dress through personal



contacts or looking on the members' area of the Association's website. It is however wise to start searching early as there may be a limited supply in your size!

If you are having your court dress made it is worth looking in *The High Sheriff* magazine for tailors or dressmakers who specialize in this, and you may find some more expensive than others; your local tailor/dressmaker may be the least expensive, but will need to know the specifications. If you are having court dress made, ostrich feathers and cut steel buttons and buckles can be obtained from specialist suppliers, via the internet or borrowed from a previous High Sheriff. Buckles can be secured to reasonably priced pumps or court shoes for male and female High Sheriffs. You can also often borrow a court sword from a previous High Sheriff and some tailors will hire them out. Expensive court tights can be substituted with inexpensive maternity tights or even 'pop' socks which are considerably more practical for men!

Suppliers of court dress and accessories known to the Association is available on the members' area of the Association website.

Declaration ceremony

In some counties this is combined with the legal service but where it is not it does not need to be a large and thereby expensive occasion and can be quite easily held at home, at the local court or church or indeed at the County Hall, all of which might offer you the venue free of charge.

Transport

The cost of having a chauffeur can be very high and is usually not required. Good planning with the event host will ensure you have a reserved parking space (avoiding parking fees) nearby and if need be a room in which to change out of court dress allowing you to easily drive to and from functions.

Award ceremonies

It is often possible to get prestigious venues free of charge if you ask the right people, although should you be offering refreshment of any kind it is important to check to see that you do not have to use the in-house caterers as often they can prove to be quite expensive. In some Counties, the Community Foundation are happy to join forces with the High Sheriff's Awards ceremony or event and to suggest recipients, and to take on some of the cost; it gives both the Foundation and the High Sheriff good publicity.

If you are holding an award ceremony, civic venues and courts are highly appropriate and may be free of charge. Often the chairman of the county council might agree to the free use of county council facilities at county hall including refreshments, the chairman being given an appropriate slot in the function. If using a court for awards the judge involved will often suspend the court so that photographs can be taken.



Certificates can be obtained from the High Sheriff Association and framed using inexpensive frames from a discount store.

Garden party/summer event

A number of recent High Sheriffs have decided against a large traditional county garden party and have instead favoured smaller, more focused events to celebrate the achievements of individuals or charities they support. If you decide to hold an event, rather than hiring expensive marquees consider using the local Guildhall, County Hall, school hall, museum or other public building before hiring a marquee. Some High Sheriffs have given examples of successfully holding two events, one in the afternoon and one in the evening, thereby enabling the use of a borrowed smaller marquee.

Often catering can be simple and done with friends using young members of the family or friends' children as waiters. You do not need to serve alcohol just because your predecessor did; tea, iced coffee and elderflower cordial at an afternoon Tea Party can be just as good, but if, at an evening function, you do serve alcohol try sparkling wine instead of champagne. It is worth remembering The Queen serves tea not alcohol at garden parties!

Entertainment in the form of various bands can sometimes be found free of charge from the Military, Fire and Rescue Service, Police, School or College or local voluntary group, and often the local police cadets are happy to assist with car parking. You should of course offer suitable refreshment and in the case of voluntary groups be prepared to make a suitable donation.

Court lunches

It is traditional for the High Sheriff, having sat with a High Court Judge in court, to give him or her lunch. This would also include the judge's clerk and any other guests you have invited. If lunch cannot be arranged in the Law Courts, often a local restaurant or hotel will put on a special reasonably priced meal, but if this option is not possible using a nearby company boardroom and a caterer can keep the price down. In this instance make sure glasses and crockery are available; if not you might have to hire or be prepared to take your own. As before, you can purchase wine which will always prove to be cheaper than a restaurant. One past High Sheriff took a high quality packed lunch to court which was enjoyed by the Judge and guests in the court dining room, which certainly kept the cost down and also curtailed the amount of time the judge was away from court!

Dinners at home

Some judges these days say they prefer more informal "kitchen table" dinners to the once traditional black tie dinner. A varied selection of guests from across the community is more important than the opulence of the event. If possible, home



cooking greatly reduces the cost of catering but some have suggested providing good ready-made meals. Often friends will be delighted to assist at home suppers allowing you to host your guests.

Other entertaining

During your year you may wish to hold networking lunches with influential people within the county to support a particular cause or for you to find out more about an issue. This might be informally at home or at a restaurant. By doing so over lunch rather than dinner there is no obligation to invite your guests spouse/partner and in a working day many will not wish to drink alcohol, thereby containing the cost.

Legal service

If it is the tradition to have trumpeters at the Legal Service these can sometimes be obtained free of charge by application to the local military unit, police or fire and rescue service band or local voluntary group band. Failing this, sometimes a trumpet voluntary can be played on the organ. Consideration needs to be given to the timing of the service to avoid additional charges from the cathedral or church and other matters, such as for example who bears the cost of printing the order of. Your Under Sheriff or predecessor should be able to advise on the established protocol regarding these matters.

Careful thought needs to be given to the hospitality offered after the service. Most people will understand if this is limited to wine and nibbles or even tea and cake especially if it is after evensong, rather than a full lunch, particularly when they are aware that the cost is borne by the High Sheriff.

General advice

Do less and focus on key events which make a difference to your community and resist the temptation to do more and spend more than your predecessor!