Association of the Lord-Lieutenants – written evidence (CCE0035)

The Association is a voluntary organisation which provides guidance and advice to the 98\(^1\) Lord-Lieutenants of counties\(^2\) in all four countries of the United Kingdom. Lord-Lieutenants are appointed by The Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister (the devolved administrations are involved in the process) and serve from the date of their appointment until their 75th birthday at the latest\(^3\). They thus provide a relatively long-term point of continuity in their counties. The office is unpaid. Lord-Lieutenants represent The Queen in their counties, and carry out many of Her functions at a local level, such as presenting certain honours, medals and awards. They also assess nominations for honour, both personal and for The Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service, and seek to encourage good nominations for both. They maintain close links with local units of Her Majesty’s Forces and their associated Reserves and Cadets; and, in England and Wales, they lead the local magistracy as Chairmen of the Advisory Committee on Justices of the Peace, in liaison with the Ministry of Justice. Lord-Lieutenants are supported in their role by a network of Deputy Lieutenants, also unpaid. In appointing their Deputies Lord-Lieutenants can and do reflect the diversity of their communities.

Lord-Lieutenants also have an undefined, but important, community role which is to promote a spirit of co-operation within their counties by encouraging voluntary service, and benevolent organisations, and by taking an active interest in the business, industrial, cultural and social life of their counties and the voluntary activity that goes on within them.

Lord-Lieutenants are strictly non-political. This enables them to work in their counties with all sections and communities without politics forming a barrier; but it also means that in responding to the Committee’s consultation the Association is unable to take a view on the policy questions that they address. Nonetheless the Association considers that the experience and activities of Lord-Lieutenants do enable them to offer evidence which it is hoped will assist the Committee in its deliberations. The Association also considers that it is useful for the Committee to be aware of the Lieutenancy as one of the mechanisms available to help with implementing any conclusions it may come to in its final Report.

The Committee’s Questions

The Association proposes to offer no evidence on Questions 3, 4 and 11 since that would involve expressing views on policy, and for the purposes of this evidence does not wish to comment on Question 12.

1. One of the fundamental purposes of Lord-Lieutenants is to promote cohesion within their counties. That involves identifying and promoting values that all citizens can subscribe to without stifling individual and cultural freedom. Given their close connection to the Crown Lord-Lieutenants seek to uphold, and to unite their communities in support of a constitutional Monarchy. In particular they have seen it as part of their role to try to ensure that the role of The Queen and the Royal Family is

\(^1\) 47 in England, 35 in Scotland, 8 in Wales and 8 in Northern Ireland.

\(^2\) Ceremonial, rather than administrative, counties, and including some cities.

\(^3\) It is unusual for a Lord-Lieutenant to step down before reaching 75. In Scotland four Lord Provosts are automatically appointed as the Lord-Lieutenants of their cities (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen).
fully understood in their communities. This was particularly marked on the occasion of Her Majesty’s Diamond Jubilee when Lord-Lieutenants made special efforts to ensure that schoolchildren understood the Monarchy, and the Association has made educational material (including PowerPoint presentations) available to Lord-Lieutenants to help them to continue this process. Lord-Lieutenants also play a key role in Royal visits to their areas, so that local activities and the people involved in them are able to receive direct Royal recognition. The Association believes that the potential of the Monarchy as a focus for bringing people together should not be underestimated. The Queen is the Queen of every citizen, and Lord-Lieutenants are able to testify from direct experience to the high regard in which she is held among all sections of the community. As The Queen’s representatives Lord-Lieutenants have a welcome entrée into a variety of diverse ethnic, minority and other groups. They are very often invited officially to local festivals and events put on by local communities, or to open local community facilities. All this gives them an opportunity to foster common values in a way that other officials might find more difficult and to bring together a wide range of agencies and organisations to look at local problems.

2. This question touches on a number of areas where Lord-Lieutenants are involved. Following on from the theme of the previous question, the Association would stress the potential of The Queen and the Royal Family to foster a sense of belonging among all citizens. Lord-Lieutenants have embraced citizenship ceremonies for those attaining British citizenship through naturalisation, and they or their deputies regularly preside at them, greeting each new citizen personally and making a speech of welcome as a very visible sign of the importance attached to the occasion. So far as education is concerned, Lord-Lieutenants do go into schools to try to increase understanding of the Monarchy, and, as previously mentioned, the Association has provided resource material for this purpose. The Association cannot offer a view on whether there should be educational or ceremonial requirements for those who are citizens by birth; but if such requirements were to be introduced Lord-Lieutenants would be willing to contribute to them on matters to do with the Monarchy and all aspects of cohesion within the community under the Crown.

5. Much of this question involves taking a view on policy, but the Association can suggest that the unique local standing of Lord-Lieutenants as non-political representatives of the Crown gives them a particular advantage when it comes to encouraging young people to take an interest in constitutional matters; and they seek to do just that, as has already been explained. They would be willing to participate in any new arrangements that covered their particular responsibilities.

6. Lord-Lieutenants are involved with many activities that encourage young people to play an active role in the community, though not the National Citizen Service in particular. Historically Lord-Lieutenants owe their existence to the Crown’s wish to improve local militias in the 16th century, and this has led to a particular link with uniformed youth organisations such as the Scouts and Girl Guides and St John and, in particular, the Army Cadet Force, the Sea Cadets and the Air Training Corps. Although clearly these last three have military origins they are not intended to be recruiting organisations for the regular forces, and their aim is to develop young people through adventure and challenge in an atmosphere of comradeship so that they become confident and active citizens. Lord-Lieutenants encourage all such activities. They contribute directly to
their aims by appointing exceptional young people from a range of organisations as Lord-Lieutenants’ Cadets, who accompany the Lord-Lieutenant on official duties and thereby gain an increased understanding of wider aspects of citizenship and public life. Any recommendations of the Committee that encouraged the development of youth organisations as a way of fostering good citizenship would be welcomed and actively supported by the Association.

7. While the Association is unable to comment on, or suggest, new policy initiatives it would point to the existing mechanisms, in particular the honours system, which has traditionally offered recognition of meritorious service to the community, and which offers scope for encouraging civic engagement. The relatively small number of honours awarded in each round means that this scope is limited, but the local profile of awards should not be underestimated. Lord-Lieutenants do not themselves nominate people for honours, but they can and do encourage the community to make nominations, and are involved in the assessment of honours nominations, enabling them to endorse particularly worthy candidates from their own direct experience or that of their Deputies. Lord-Lieutenants and their Deputies also play an important role in assessing local nominations for Queen’s Awards for Voluntary Service. This often involves visiting nominated organisations and holding detailed local discussion before recommendations are put forward to the national panel. This is one way among many in which Lord-Lieutenants keep in touch with, and encourage, the voluntary sector.

8. Naturally the Association would identify as common values those that stem from Lord-Lieutenants’ role as representatives of the Crown, namely a constitutional Monarchy, democracy and the rule of law. As already mentioned the Association would particularly wish to underline The Queen’s unifying potential stemming from the regard in which she is held among all communities, and would willingly participate in initiatives to realise that potential to the maximum. So far as the rule of law is concerned, Lord-Lieutenants in England and Wales are directly involved in the courts system through their Chairmanship of Advisory Committees for Justices of the Peace. Although it is not the role of the Association to identify threats to the values it has identified it would always urge careful consideration of proposals for changes to the administration of justice that might lessen opportunities for direct participation by citizens in the justice system or affect access to justice at the local level.

9. Any feeling among communities and groups that they have been “left behind” is likely to stem from the experiences of individuals at the local level. It is therefore at the local level that initiatives to increase engagement are likely to produce the most immediately visible results. Lord-Lieutenants, being outside the political system, are well placed to provide local leadership and active encouragement of initiatives to improve inclusiveness and cohesion. The Association would suggest that any recommendations on this issue should include steps that can be taken at a local level as well as national policy initiatives. Lord-Lieutenants have unique experience of the particular factors that affect rural as opposed to urban areas, and, indeed, the different factors that apply in all four countries of the United Kingdom. The fact that an appointment as a Lord-Lieutenant normally lasts for many years means that they have a deep knowledge of what goes on in their counties and their official, yet non-political, status means that they can gain the confidence of, and foster contacts between, groups that might otherwise not normally communicate with each other.
10. The Association would again point to the desirability of fostering common values beneficial to cohesion and integration that do not conflict with cultural and individual opinions and loyalties. Lord-Lieutenants are an important part of a local mechanisms for encouraging the dissemination of such values.

Additional comments

Although this evidence has stressed the non-political nature of the Lieutenancy it should not be assumed that there is no contact between Lord-Lieutenants and their local authorities or other agencies within their Counties. Lord-Lieutenants and their Deputies will normally be in regular discussion with Chief Executives and Leaders to review matters, including economic and community development, opportunities for Royal visits, nominations for Queen’s Awards or for national honours or even Royal Garden Party invitations, which are highly valued ways in which local community engagement can be recognised. Likewise there is regular contact with Chief Constables, local religious leaders, voluntary and youth organisations, and every organisation that goes to make up the life of the community. Without wishing to labour the point their ability to be involved in every aspect of local life without any political or personal axe to grind gives them a major role in fostering cohesion and inclusion.

The Association would be very happy to assist the Committee further if it would be useful.

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