

Wardens;

My Lord Mayor Locum Tenens;

My Lord Chief Justice;

Master of the Rolls;

Sheriffs;

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen

In recent times the Court of Aldermen, recognising the many demands upon the Lord Mayor's time, has agreed that the Lord Mayor Locum Tenens might respond to the Civic Toast.

So can I say two things on behalf this Company?

Firstly, we know that there are many demands upon the time of the Lord Mayor and so we understand that he is not able to be with us tonight.

Secondly, we would want you to know how grateful we are to you for being able to represent the Lord Mayor on this

occasion. Please give him and the Lady Mayoress Tessa our warmest greetings and best wishes for a happy and memorable year.

This annual livery banquet is one of the highlights - if not the highlight - of our year.

It provides an opportunity for us to meet together with our friends in the Livery, to entertain our guests and to show our support for the great office that you represent and our commitment to the City of London and its institutions.

The Lord Mayor has stated that his theme for his year of office is "*The World in the City*", celebrating the contribution that people from all over the world make to the success of the City of London. He has encouraged the livery companies to involve as many young people as possible so as to introduce them to and interest them in civic London. He has suggested that we might form links with schools or service cadet units.

Reflecting his own business experience, he has also been keen for livery companies to become involved with the Asian business community.

Do I not speak for us all when I say that this Company applauds and welcomes his suggestions?

Now, at first blush, arbitration is not an activity with which young people are usually associated. Yet arbitration and alternative dispute resolution are techniques that touch on their lives more often than they might realize. They are important skills for life. Whether it is the referee on the sports pitch, the teacher in the classroom, the parent in the home or even another child in the playground, all of these people will be called upon to rule on disputes or help the protagonists find a solution with which they can live.

In a world where conflict and confrontation is all around them and us – sometimes nearer to us than we would ever wish -

now, more than ever, is there a need for a new generation to appreciate that solutions that satisfy both sides to an argument can be found with open minds and imagination.

As you know, Sir Robert, we are a modern Company, even if the art and skill that we profess is one from before time immemorial.

As each year has passed towards this, our Silver Jubilee year, so the Company has drawn strength from the support and wisdom of its increasing membership and the consolidation of its assets.

We seek to play our part in reaching out to the younger generation. We have sponsored students both at King Edwards School Witley and at the Guildhall School of Music; we have established our Apprentice Scheme to assist those studying for professional qualifications and we have committed ourselves to admission by patrimony.

We continue to look for ways to make this Company relevant to both our professional interests and our charitable aims.

We very much hope to forge closer links with schools. Towards that end, the Court has determined that a prize should be funded at King Edward's School Witley. It is to be awarded to the pupil who has made the greatest contribution in the conciliation scheme that the school operates, helping resolve those differences that from time to time can exist between young people.

The place of young people in the world today is also very much at the centre of the Lord Mayor's Appeal. The extraordinary work done by Lord Mayor Treloar's School and College in Hampshire has rightly been brought to our attention by the Lord Mayor.

Whilst many of us in the Livery are familiar with its work with young people with severe disabilities, we now know that the Lord Mayor is to inaugurate a three-year appeal with the Princess Royal as Patron. One of the objects of this appeal is to assist young people when they leave Treloar's. Called *Trelinks*, this is a befriending and mentoring scheme to allow Treloar's graduates to integrate into their new communities, both the young person and the community benefiting.

The appeal deserves every success.

It gives me great pleasure therefore to invite you, Sir Robert, to accept on behalf of the Lord Mayor a contribution from us towards this most worthy cause.

(The Master then presented the Lord Mayor Locum Tenens with a cheque for £1500.00 in favour of the Lord Mayor's Appeal.)

It is my hope also that the Company will establish a link with a services unit. It is a matter that has received consideration by the Court and it is something that may come to fruition in due course.

The third suggested link -- that with the Asian business community -- is one that has already been forged in our distinctive way by several members of the Company as well-known and respected arbitrators. Their expertise has been called on not only in this country but also in many parts of Asia.

The Lord Mayor has indicated that, as well as his numerous commitments in this great city and overseas, it is his intention to visit a number of regional financial centres, including Birmingham.

That gives me an especial feeling of pride since Birmingham has been my professional home for some 20 years.

I can speak with first-hand knowledge of the strength of expertise of the legal community there.

Arbitration, you will not be surprised to hear, is not an activity confined to the City of London but one that occurs even in the West Midlands.

The Civil Justice Centre in Birmingham includes three specialist judges who deal with the commercial, Chancery and technology and construction cases that come before the Court. May I embarrass them by saying that it is a tribute to their expertise that those cases come not simply from the West Midlands region but from other parts of the country including London?

The three specialist judges are all enthusiastic supporters of arbitration and alternative dispute resolution.

I am very glad that Judge Alton, Judge Norris and Judge Kirkham are able to be here tonight. The reputation that the Birmingham Court has achieved through their work and that of their colleagues should give the Lord Mayor confidence that the Second City makes an important contribution to the legal and financial life of the country.

I can assure him that he will be welcomed most warmly when he comes to visit.

Tonight, though, we are in his house.

The Lord Mayor of London may change from year to year; the Sheriffs too.

But the Mansion House remains: a symbol of constancy and surely one of the true icons of all things British.

I have no doubt that the City of London will continue to flourish: as a financial centre, a home of legal expertise and as a business community. We are very proud to be associated with it and those who govern it.

May I ask you to stand?

I have the honour to propose the Civic Toast:

The Lord Mayor, the City of London Corporation and the Sheriffs.