

Sleaford Town Council

CONSTITUTION Chapter 7 Civic Protocol



The Town Hall
Quayside House
Navigation Yard
Sleaford
Lincolnshire NG34 7TW

Tel: 01529 303456
E-Mail: enquiries@sleaford.gov.uk

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Civic Protocol booklet has been produced to assist the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor to understand their roles and responsibilities and provide some useful information, which may be of assistance when undertaking the Civic role. The Civic Protocol also assists Mayors and Council Officers to apply a consistent approach when dealing with issues connected to the Civic function. The object of the information is to try and ensure that the Civic year runs as smoothly as possible. Not all eventualities will be covered by this booklet but remember that assistance is always available at the Council Offices.

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3 BACKGROUND

Town Mayor Section 245 (6) of the Local Government Act 1972 gave Parish Councils the power by resolution to give themselves the title of Town Council and the Chair of a Town Council is entitled to the style of 'Town Mayor'. A Town Mayor has the same rights and duties as a local Council Chair. The Councillor becoming Mayor Being the Mayor is different from being a Councillor. A Mayor, by virtue of the Office, can use his/her decision to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector, mould social cohesion etc. A Mayor may also have many meetings with dignitaries, endless engagements, late nights, early mornings and is in the public eye for virtually the whole year. With this in mind the Mayor needs to exhibit a keen and genuine interest in those he/she meets, show enthusiasm and commitment to the role, ensure he/she is non-party political, speak up for the town's interests and always be mindful of the dignity of the Office. For those chosen, or who are thinking of putting themselves forward for selection, one thing is clear – being Mayor is most different from being a Councillor, as it has different roles, different working hours, different restraints etc. However, it is also most probably a hugely enjoyable and rewarding job if entered into in the right spirit. The Mayor is elected by Sleaford Town Council at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May. A new Deputy Mayor is also elected at this meeting. The new Mayor makes the following declaration when accepting the Term of Office at the Annual Town Council Meeting: "I.....having been elected to the Office of Mayor for Sleaford Town Council, hereby declare that I take the said Office upon myself, and will duly and

faithfully fulfil the duties thereof according to the best of my knowledge and ability. I undertake to observe the Code as to the conduct which is expected of Members of Sleaford Town Council” The Declaration of Acceptance of Office is signed by both the new Mayor and the Town Clerk of the Council. The new Deputy Mayor also makes a similar declaration. The Mayor’s Term of Office is for one year and during this time the Mayor continues to be a Member of the Council and presides over the meetings of the Council.

4 ROLE OF THE MAYOR

The role of the Mayor is to undertake Sleaford Town Council’s civic and ceremonial duties in a dignified manner so as to uphold and enhance the status of the town and engender civic pride.

This objective is of significant importance and should be borne in mind when the Mayor carries out their duties throughout the year and in deciding what initiatives they choose to undertake. During the Civic year, the Mayor supports a wide variety of events throughout the area. The Mayor receives invitations to all kinds of events, functions and engagements and every invitation is considered equally. If the Mayor cannot attend a function, the Deputy Mayor may be asked to attend on his/her behalf.

Duties which the Mayor will carry out include:

- Acting as host on behalf of the Council at functions organised by the Council
- Attending functions and engagements within Sleaford, and on occasions outside the town, as a ceremonial representative of the Council
- Undertaking official openings or presentations on behalf of the Council
- Organising events to raise funds for the Mayor’s chosen charities
- Representing the Council during royal, celebrity, twinning or VIP visits to the town
- Representing the Town Council during events such as St Georges Day
- Attending civic events at NKDC and Lincolnshire County Council
- Other events as required by the Council

The Mayor will choose his/her own consort who can be either a spouse/partner, fellow Councillor, family member or friend. If the consort is female, she is often referred to as the Mayoress. The consort should be given equivalent respect and dignity whenever he/she accompanies the Mayor on Civic engagements. When representing Sleaford Town Council, the Mayor and consort will usually wear the official Chains of Office. The Chains of Office will normally be worn at all official functions within Sleaford and they can also be worn at functions outside of the town when invited in an official capacity, although there are some exceptions to this which are usually specified in the official invitation. The Mayor also has a number of statutory functions as set out below:

- If present at a Sleaford Town Council meeting, the Mayor must chair the meeting
- The Mayor has a casting vote in the event of a tie
- The Mayor should ensure, together with the Town Clerk, that the Council makes legal decisions
- The Mayor has a duty to ensure the agenda is followed correctly

5 SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR

Day to day support for the Mayor is provided by the Office Manager and other employee support under the general direction of the Town Clerk. The Office Manager is an employee of Sleaford Town Council who, as well as carrying out other duties for the Council, assists the Mayor with organising their Term of Office. This position includes arranging a meeting with the new Mayor, once elected at the Annual Town Council Meeting, to arrange the Civic year, discuss lines of communication, diary management and the specific support required. Each Mayor may have different needs or preferences in the way in which they are supported by the Office Manager. During the Mayoral year, arrangements will also be made for an official photograph to be taken.

The Office Manager receives invitations for the Mayor which must be confirmed by either post, or by electronic means. The Mayor will be notified of the invitation as soon as possible.

Events and engagements will be logged onto the Mayor's Engagements spread sheet. The Mayor should respond whether they wish to attend and whether they will be taking a consort with him. If the Mayor cannot attend they may request that the Deputy Mayor or another Councillor attend on their behalf. Once it is confirmed who will be attending, the appropriate response is sent to the host organiser by the Office Manager who will also check on any other details regarding the event e.g. is a speech needed, prize giving, dress code, Chains of Office, transport, parking arrangements and so on. If both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor decline, then similarly an appropriate response to the organiser will be sent thanking them and giving apologies. All correspondence for the Mayor is kept in the town Council office. It is courteous of the Mayor to send a thank you letter to the host after the event, this will be sent by the Office Manager by email or post.

The Office Manager will also support and act on the decisions agreed by Council.

6 MAYOR'S CIVIC SERVICE

Each year the Mayor holds a Civic Service. In previous years this has taken the form of a Civic Service reflecting religious and civic importance. However the specifics of the event are entirely the choice of the Mayor but must be kept within the agreed budget, must be held in the parish of Sleaford and must be a suitable civic occasion inviting local and regional civic dignitaries. The Mayor must discuss and agree the proposal with Council so the full implications of organising and arranging these events are clear and they can be monitored. A civic meal should be organised to co-ordinate with the civic service.

7 MAYOR'S CHARITIES

The Mayor's charity raises funds for local charities and good causes in the Sleaford area. It is advisable to choose the charity or charities to be supported at an early stage. The Mayor may decide on either one main charity to support number of local charities or good causes. It is common to announce the chosen charity at the Annual Town Council Meeting when the Mayor is elected. The chosen charity or charities will then be notified and all funds raised at the events to be held by the Mayor will be donated to the chosen charity, usually at a presentation to be held at the end of the Mayor's year in Office. Funds raised for the Mayor's charities cannot be used for any other purpose other than as a donation to the charity identified when the funds were raised, save for to cover all reasonable costs to raise the funds.

During the Mayor's Term of Office, he/she can hold fund-raising events for his/her charity e.g. a ball, dinner, dance, quiz etc. Events/functions must be cost neutral to the Council and be organised by the Office Manager. Other events may be organised by local organisations, clubs or institutions, with proceeds given to the Mayor's charity. Donations to enable the Mayor to raise funds for local charities, the Council relies on local businesses donating prizes to be used on raffles and tombolas. Although many businesses do support the Mayor's Charity, there are still those who will not donate prizes. The Mayor may feel it necessary to visit local shops, pubs and businesses around the town to ask for prizes as sometimes the local shop owners/businesses prefer a more personal approach and consequently more likely to support the charity.

Cheque Presentation. The Mayor will announce the total amount raised for his/her charity at the end of the Term of Office. The Annual Town Council Meeting might be considered an appropriate time to present cheques to the charities nominated. The local press are invited to attend however if absent photographs will be taken and press releases sent to local newspapers for their use.

8 MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE

The Mayor may be paid an allowance to meet the expenses of his office (LGA 1972, ss 15(5) and 34(5)). The Local Government Act does not stipulate the type or category of expenditure for which the Mayor may use the Civic Allowance. However, it is commonly described as recompense for the expenses of maintaining the dignity of the Office. Furthermore, general items include:

- Poppy wreaths
- Collections and raffle prizes
- Personal hospitality (including lunches and dinners)
- Attendance at engagements
- Civic gifts, a stock of appropriate items should be maintained
- The official Mayor's Christmas card

It should be noted that the purchase of the above items would not necessarily qualify towards the allowance for tax-deductible purposes; it merely suggests that the items relate to maintaining the dignity of the Office. There is also other budget lines which contains provision for certain Civic events including the Civic Service, the Mayor's inauguration (Annual Town Council Meeting) and one off Town Council events supported or hosted by the Mayor. It is important for the Mayor to plan the use of the allowance over the year. Once the budget level has been reached, no payments can be made or further orders placed by Council staff.

Any underspend goes back into Council funds.

9 SUPPORT BY DEPUTY MAYOR

The Member elected as Deputy Mayor will support the Mayor throughout the year by representing the Council when the Mayor is unable to. If the Mayor is not present at a Council meeting, the Deputy Mayor must preside. In effect, the Deputy Mayor has no standing as Deputy Mayor when the Mayor is present but assumes the precedence and standing of the Mayor when he/she is deputising for the Mayor rather than acting as Deputy.

10 CIVIC INSIGNIA AND REGALIA

The Mayor's chain and badge of office are the outward signs of the Civic Office held. The Mayor should not wear the Civic insignia/regalia in another capacity or another area without express permission from the Council. Civic chains should never be worn with a military uniform. However, a Mayor who is a member of the clergy may wear full canonicals with the chain over the gown. Similarly, the chain may be worn over academic dress.

The Council may decide to introduce a Mayoral civic uniform.

11 PRECEDENCE AND PROTOCOL

A formal distinction has to be made between the style of address of a Mayor and that of a Town Mayor. Town Mayors should be addressed as 'Mr/Madam Mayor'. NB - a female Mayor is not a Mayoress. Precedence and protocol for visits and events is often set by custom and practice, with the exception of Royal visits. The Town Clerk will be able to offer further advice and assistance on these matters.

12 RECEIPT OF GIFTS

In the course of the duty of being Mayor, gifts will be offered to the Mayor. It is suggested that all Members should treat with extreme caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that is made to them personally. The Code of Conduct requires Members, including Mayors, to register any gifts or hospitality over a specified limit that are received in connection with their official duties as a Member, and the source of the gift or hospitality. Register the gift or hospitality and its source within 28 days of receiving it. Be aware that this will now be a personal interest. If a matter under consideration is likely to affect a person who gave you a gift or hospitality that is registered. If in doubt, consult the Town Clerk.

13 THE CIVIC YEAR - EVENTS

Below is a list of typical events which are organised during the Mayor's year in Office.

These dates are discussed during a meeting with the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Office Manager at the beginning of each new year to suit the Mayor's diary.

Civic dignitaries from the Council's designated list together with leaders of local community groups and organisations, colleagues, friends and family are invited.

Annual Town Meeting - this is not the Annual Meeting of the Town Council. It is a legal requirement that all parishes in England hold an 'Annual Town/Parish Meeting' to which all local electors are entitled to attend.

In Sleaford, the meeting is organised and chaired by the Mayor and can adopt any format showing the work of the previous year and the aims and objectives going forward are given.

Organisations that have been supported through the Town Council's grant scheme may be invited to display and refreshments are offered. The meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June each year and the venue is open to discussion.

Remembrance Sunday - Remembrance Sunday is held on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of Armistice Day which is on November 11th at 11am.

Whilst the parade and the day's events are organised by the British Legion, the Mayor is always invited to the service and will lay a wreath on behalf of Sleaford Town Council in memory of those men and women who gave their lives for their country.

Miscellaneous Events - various miscellaneous events are attended by the Mayor, examples of which are included in the list below: Town twinning events – Sleaford is twinned. Opening of and attendance to fayres / garden parties / shows / unveilings etc. Events, exhibitions and presentations at local schools.

The Christmas lights "Switch On" STC organised events LCC and NKDC Civic Services, Civic Events and Charity Fund-raising Events

14 MAYOR'S END OF YEAR

At the Annual Town Council Meeting which notes the end of the Mayor's Term of Office, the outgoing Mayor makes a short speech and needs to consider a number of matters:

- Thanks to support staff is always appreciated
- Thanks to the Mayor's personal supporters – spouse/partner, family, friends etc.
- Thanks to the Deputy Mayor for support and assistance
- Thanks to the charity supporters, Councillors who have helped and anyone else who has influenced or assisted in any way throughout the year
- Talking to the successor, when announced, giving advice and information The new Mayor will also present the previous Mayor with a Past Mayor's badge