



# Ross-on-Wye Town Council

## Civic Protocol

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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.

### 2. 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 Chairman of a Town Council.

Council is entitled to the style of 'Town Mayor'. A town mayor has the same rights and duties as a local council chairman.

#### **The Councillor becoming Mayor**

Being the mayor is different from being a councillor. A mayor, by virtue of the office, can use his/her position 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, and 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 s/he meets, show enthusiasm, empathy, and commitment to the role, ensure s/he is non-party political, always be politically astute in relationship to the Town Council's interests, 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 a hugely enjoyable and rewarding job if entered into in the right spirit.

The mayor is elected by the full 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 Ross-on-Wye 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 Ross-on-Wye Town Council “.*

The Declaration of Acceptance of Offer is signed by both the new Mayor and the Town Clerk of the Council.

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 Full Council meetings.

### **3. ROLE OF THE MAYOR**

The role of the mayor is to undertake Ross-on-Wye 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 may carry out include:

- Acting as host on behalf of the Council at functions organised by the Council
- Attending functions and engagements within Ross-on-Wye-on-Wye, 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 or VIP visits to the town.

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 s/he accompanies the mayor on civic engagements.

When representing Ross-on-Wye 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 Ross-on-Wye 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 is usually only entitled to wear his chain of office within his own town. For areas outside of Ross-on-Wye the mayor needs the permission of the council chairman of the area he will be visiting (for Herefordshire Council, the Chairman has given a standing permission to cover the whole of Herefordshire).

### **4. SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR**

Day to day support for the mayor is provided by the Office Administrator under the general direction of the Deputy Town Clerk. The Office Administrator is an employee of Ross-on-Wye 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 which they are supported by the Office Administrator.

The Office Administrator receives invitations for the mayor by either post, email or via the Town Council website. The mayor will be notified of the invite as soon as possible. The Office Administrator will send a diary invitation with a copy of the invitation and response embedded so that it can be viewed remotely. The mayor should respond whether s/he wishes to attend and whether s/he will be taking a consort with him/her. If the mayor cannot attend s/he may request that the deputy mayor or another councillor attend on his/her behalf. Once it is confirmed who will be attending, the appropriate response is sent to the event organiser by the Office Administrator 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, gift, donation 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.

## **5. MAYOR'S CIVIC SERVICE**

There is a "Civic Service" hosted annually by the mayor reflecting the civic importance of the event. The detailed arrangements of the event are entirely the choice of the Mayor. This event could be in the form of a non-religious Mayor's Sunday which celebrates the town of Ross-on-Wye and its people. However, it must be kept within the agreed budget, must be held in the parish of Ross-on-Wye and must be a suitable civic occasion inviting local and regional civic dignitaries.

The mayor must discuss the proposal with the Office Administrator/Town Clerk so the full implications of organising and arranging these events are clear and they can be monitored.

## **6. MAYOR'S CHARITY**

The Mayor's charity traditionally raises funds for local charities in the Ross-on-Wye area. It is advisable to choose the charity or charities to be supported at an early stage. The mayor may decide to support one or more charities, projects, 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 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, s/he can hold a main fundraising event for his/her charity e.g. a ball, dinner, dance etc. In addition, one other mayoral event can be held. Both events/functions must be cost neutral to the Council and can be organised with the assistance of the Office Administrator.

Other events may be organised by the mayor, local organisations, clubs, or institutions, with proceeds given to the mayor's charity account.

There is a separate Mayor's Charity Account which is held at Lloyds Bank and is administered and managed by the mayor with the assistance of the Office Administrator/~~Town Clerk~~. These funds are kept entirely separately from the Council's and are outside the control of the Council's Financial Regulations.

Ross Community Development Trust also offers fund raising assistance to the mayor through its website, but there are certain restrictions which may apply. There are benefits to this option as Gift Aid can be claimed back on applicable donations made.

### **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 choose not to 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 are 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 Mayor Making Ceremony might be considered an appropriate time to present cheques to the charities nominated. The local press is invited to attend however, if absent, photographs will be taken, and press releases sent to local newspapers for their use.

## **7. MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE**

The mayor may be paid an allowance to meet the expenses of his office (LGA 1972, s 15(5) and s 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:

- Clothing for Mayor and Consort
- Travel costs
- Donations to local charities
- Collections
- Personal hospitality (including lunches and dinners)
- Attendance at engagements
- The official Mayor's Christmas card

It should be noted that expenditure on 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.

Any allowable expenses incurred by the Deputy Mayor while deputising for the Mayor are payable out of the Mayor's Allowance.

If the Mayor's Allowance is not fully spent by the end of the Mayor's term of office, then he/she may seek permission from the Finance and Personnel Sub-Committee to contribute the balance to the Mayor's nominated charity for his/her year of office.

It is the Mayor's responsibility to ensure a complete record of expenditure is kept to enable allowable claims to HMRC for tax reclamation to be made if appropriate.

There is also a Civic Functions budget which contains provision for certain civic events including the Civic Service and Mayor Making, 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, unless the mayor decides to underwrite the expenditure personally or requests from Council approval of additional expenditure outlining the full reasons for the request.

## **8. 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 Full Council meeting, the deputy mayor must preside.

In effect, the deputy mayor has no standing when the mayor is present but assumes the precedence and standing of the mayor when s/he is deputising for the mayor rather than acting as deputy.

The deputy mayor should avoid wearing the Deputy's Chain of Office in the presence of the mayor with the exception of Mayor Making.

## **9. SUPPORT BY MAYOR'S CADET**

It is possible to gain support from a Cadet from a local branch during the mayor's term of office. Permission must be granted from the Commanding Officer of the local branch. A badge with the Town Council crest is usually presented to the Cadet. The role of the Mayor's Cadet is to assist the mayor by attending the civic events laid on by the Council. The programme of likely events should be given to the PR Administrator e.g. Mayor Making Ceremony, Civic Service, Remembrance Sunday to grant permission from the Commander.

At the end of the mayor's term, a gift should be presented to the Cadet at one of the organisation's event e.g. Passing Out Parade.

## **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 and/or appropriate District Council Chairman.

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.

## **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. It is suggested that Town Mayors should be addressed as 'Mr/Madam Town Mayor'. Note that 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, often 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 the offer of any gifts or hospitality worth £50.00 or over that are received in connection with their official duties as a member, and the source of the offer of gift or hospitality.

You must 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 Administrator at the beginning of each new year to suit the mayor's diary.

### **Annual Parish 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 Ross-on-Wye, the meeting is organised by the town clerk and chaired by the mayor and can adopt any format. Organisations that have been supported through the Town Council's grant scheme may be invited to make a display or presentation. Refreshments are available at the close of the meeting.

The meeting must be held between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1st June (inclusive) each year and the venue is open to discussion, however it is normally held at the Larruperz Centre.

### **Mayor Making Ceremony**

This ceremony is normally held in June at the Larruperz Centre. Invitations are sent to mayors of other towns, dignitaries, and chairman of affiliated outside bodies. The Mayor's Cadet will be present if s/he wishes to have the support of one.

### **Civic Service/Mayor's Sunday (Previously mentioned in Para 6)**

The Civic Service or Mayor's Sunday is usually held in September. The format of the day is entirely for the mayor to decide but must be within budget and held within the parish boundary. Civic dignitaries from the Council's designated list together with leaders of local community groups and organisations, colleagues, friends, and family are invited.

### **Remembrance Sunday**

Remembrance Sunday is held on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of Armistice Day which is on November 11th. Whilst the parade and the day's events are organised on behalf of the Council by the Royal British Legion, the mayor is always invited to the service at the War Memorial and will lay a wreath on behalf of the Town Council in memory of those men and women who gave their lives for their country.

A service of remembrance at St Mary's Church follows which the mayor is expected to attend.

## **Miscellaneous Events**

Various miscellaneous events are attended by the mayor, examples of which are included in the list below:

- Town twinning events
- Host informal visits by dignitaries from twinned towns
- Opening of and attendance to fayres/garden parties/shows/unveilings etc.
- Presenting awards and prizes to individuals and community organisations
- Events, exhibitions and presentations at local schools, Ross Carnival
- Christmas Fayre and the Christmas lights “Switch On”
- Town Council organised events
- Other Council’s Civic Services, Civic Events and Charity Fundraising Events

*Reviewed by Full Council, October 2022*