


Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council

CIVIC PROTOCOL



1. INTRODUCTION.

This Civic Protocol booklet has been produced to assist the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor, their escorts/consorts and Councillors to understand the civic roles and responsibilities of the Mayoralty and provide useful information, which may be of assistance when undertaking a 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 ensuring 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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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 the Town Council the title 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 their position to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector and mould social cohesion.

A Mayor will also have many meetings with dignitaries, numerous 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 they meet, show enthusiasm and commitment to the role, ensure they are non-party political, speak up for the towns 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 and different restraints. It is essential to discuss this with employers and family in advance of accepting the office. However, it is a hugely enjoyable and rewarding job if entered into the right spirit.

The Mayor is elected by the full council at the Annual General Meeting (Mayor-making) in May. A Deputy Mayor is also elected at this meeting. The new Mayor and Deputy Mayor each make the following declaration when accepting the Term of Office:

I, XXXXXXXX

having been elected to the office of Mayor for the Town of Swanscombe and Greenhithe declare that I take that office upon myself and will duly and faithfully fulfil the duties of it according to the best of my judgement and ability.

I undertake to comply with Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council's Code of Conduct in the performance of my functions in that office.

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office is signed by the new Mayor / Deputy Mayor and the Town Clerk.

The Mayoral 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 Full Council.

3. ROLE OF THE MAYOR.

During the Civic year, the Mayor supports a wide variety of events throughout the area and at these events the Mayor's behaviour and manner must be appropriate at all times so as not to bring the Town Council into disrepute. The Mayor receives invitations to all types 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. Neither the Mayor nor Deputy Mayor should solicit engagements or visits or otherwise procure favours by virtue of office.

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 Swanscombe and Greenhithe 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 Charity Fund.
- Representing the Council during royal, celebrity or VIP visits to the town

The Mayor will choose their own consort who can be a spouse/partner, fellow Councillor, family member or friend. If the consort is female she is referred to as the Mayoress. If the Mayoress is also a Councillor then they should decide to attend as either the Mayoress or Councillor at civic functions, they cannot wear the chain when attending as a Councillor.

The consort should be given equivalent respect and dignity whenever they accompany the Mayor on Civic engagements, although they have no civic status unless they accompany the mayor.

When representing the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town Council, the Mayor and consort will usually wear the official Chains of Office, the Chains of Office will normally be worn at official functions within Swanscombe and Greenhithe 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 the full Council meeting the Mayor must chair the meeting;
- The Mayor has a casting vote in the event of an equal vote at a full Council meeting;
- The Mayor has a duty to ensure the agenda is followed correctly and implement the Council's Standing Orders with respect to conduct at meetings;
- The Mayor, together with the Town Clerk, should ensure the Council makes legal decisions.

4. SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR.

Day to day support for the Mayor is provided by the Administration Assistant under the general direction of the Town Clerk.

The Administration Assistant receives invitations for the Mayor by post, email or fax. As soon as possible the Mayor will be notified of the invitation (a weekly list is sent to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor). On occasions the Mayor may be personally approached to attend an event, these requests should be directed to the Administration Assistant. It is essential that every engagement/appointment is routed through the council offices to avoid confusion.

The Mayor should respond, to the Administration Assistant, if they wish to attend and indicate whether they will be taking a consort/escort with them. Consideration should be given as to the impression given if no-one from the Council attends the engagement. If the Mayor cannot attend and considers the invitation would be of benefit to the Town and local community, they may request that the Deputy Mayor or another Councillor attends on their behalf.

Once it is confirmed who will be attending the appropriate response is sent to the host organiser by the Administration Assistant who will also check on any other details regarding the event e.g. parking, dress code, whether a speech is required, Chains of Office and so on. If both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are unable to attend 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.

The Administration Assistants are responsible to the Town Clerk, not to any Councillor including the Mayor.

5. MAYORS CHARITY FUND.

The Mayors Charity Fund traditionally raises funds for organisations in the Swanscombe and Greenhithe area. It is advisable to select the organisations to benefit from the fund as early as possible (it would be appropriate to announce this at the Annual General Meeting when the Mayor is elected).

The chosen organisation/s will then be notified, and all funds raised at the events to be held by the Mayor will be donated to the organisation/s at the end of the Mayor's year in office.

Funds raised for the Mayor's Charity Fund cannot be used for any other purpose other than as a donation to the organisation/s identified when the funds were raised, save to cover all reasonable costs to raise the funds.

Funds raised at events organised by the Mayor, or the Council, should be submitted to the Council Offices as soon as is possible after the events held to raise them (usually within the following working week).

Other events may be organised by local organisations, clubs, or institutions, with proceeds given to the Mayors Charity Fund.

❖ Donations.

To enable the Mayor to raise funds for local organisations the Council relies on local businesses and individuals to donate prizes to be used on raffles and tombola's. Although many businesses do support the Mayors Charity Fund there are still those that 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 fund raising.

❖ Distribution of funds raised.

The Annual General Meeting might be considered an appropriate time to announce the amounts to be distributed to the organisation/s nominated during the previous year. The Administration Assistant will arrange for cheques and appropriate letters to be raised, signed and sent out to the relevant organisation/s.

6. CIVIC BUDGET.

The Mayor may be paid expenses to meet the expenses of his office (LGA 1972, s.15 (5) and 34 (5)). The Local Government Act (LGA) 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. The Town Council set the level of allowance during its budget setting process.

General items include.

- Clothing and partners clothing.
- Donations to charities.
- Collections.
- Poppy Wreaths.
- Personal hospitality (including lunches and dinners);
- Travel and attendance at engagements.
- 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 may relate to maintaining the dignity of the Office.

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.

The allowance can be paid in advance but remains the property of the Council until accounted for and substantiated by the submission of receipts by the Town Mayor to the Administration Assistant. This should be carried out in a timely manner when the expenses are incurred and not left until the end of the term of office.

7. SUPPORT BY THE DEPUTY MAYOR.

The Councillor elected as Deputy Mayor will support the Mayor throughout the year by representing the Council when asked by the Mayor to deputise for them.

If the Mayor is not present at a full 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 they are deputising for the Mayor in their absence.

The Deputy Mayor should not wear the Deputy Chain of Office in the presence of the Mayor exception on his or her election at Mayor-making. The chains of office may be worn at other Civic events if the Mayor deems it appropriate.

If the Deputy Mayor incurs expenses when representing the Mayor these should be reported to the Administration Assistant who will obtain authorisation from the Mayor for reimbursement from the Mayor's Allowance. The same guidance is applied for expenditure by the Deputy Mayor as by the Mayor.

8. CIVIC INSIGNIA AND REGALIA.

The Chains 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 the express prior permission from the host Council.

Civic chains should not 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.

9. 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*”. 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.

10. 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 Councillors, including Mayors, to register any gifts or hospitality worth £25.00 or over that are received in connection with their official duties as a Councillor and the source of the 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.

11. MAYORS END OF YEAR.

At the Annual General Meeting which denotes 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 the 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 Fund supporters and anyone that has assisted in any way throughout the year.

The new Mayor will present the previous Mayor with a Past Mayor’s badge.

USE BY MAYOR: SWANCOMBE CENTRE (contained in Management Agreement (2.2.1.8))

The free use of the Main Hall, bar areas and staffing support for the Annual Civic Night (date to be agreed each year) plus 1 other free use of the hall for a Town Mayoral fund-raising event (date to be agreed each year). Provided that The Manager will not be under any obligation to meet the cost of refreshments for any of the Town Council's civic or community related meetings.

1 x FREE USE OF COUNCIL HALL FOR TOWN MAYORAL EVENT (minute 212/11 of 13 Oct 2011 Town Council meeting).

Members were asked to consider the request made by the Town Mayor. Members agreed that the current, and future Mayors, be allowed to have one free Town Council Hall hire during their term of office and that this must be used to hold a suitable and appropriate event to raise money for the Town Mayors Charity Fund. No payment in lieu of not holding an event would be considered and revenue bookings would take precedence.

RESOLVED:

That the current, and future Mayors, be allowed to have one free Town Council Hall hire during their term of office and that this must be used to hold a suitable and appropriate event to raise money for the Town Mayors Charity Fund. No payment in lieu of not holding an event would be considered and revenue bookings would take precedence.

USE BY MAYOR: HERITAGE COMMUNITY HALL – Leased by Walk Tall (contained in Lease (36))

The Tenant shall provide one event in the Property in each calendar year at no cost to the Landlord to support the Town Mayor's charity.