



## Guidance Notes & Protocol for the Town Mayor

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If you require any support in understanding or applying this policy, please contact the Corporate Services Manager. In addition, in line with the Equality Act 2010, we will make reasonable adjustments to remove or reduce disadvantages faced by disabled employees, Councillors, or applicants.

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Protocol has been produced to assist the Town Mayor to understand their role and responsibilities and provide some useful information, which may be of assistance when undertaking their civic role. The Protocol also assists council officers to apply a consistent approach when dealing with issues connected to the function of the Town Mayor.
- 1.2 The Protocol is intended to be an addition to and not a substitute for the advice and assistance which is available from the Mayor's Secretary and the Corporate Services Manager. You will be provided with all possible support and assistance on the workings of the role of Town Mayor.

**2 Appointment of the Town Mayor & Town Mayor's declaration**

- 2.1 The Town Mayor/Chair of Council (and Deputy Town Mayor/Vice-Chair) are elected by members of the Council at the Annual Meeting of the Full Town Council in May of each year. The Town Mayor/Chair remains in office until immediately after the new Town Mayor/Chair is elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.
- 2.2 The new Town Mayor makes the following declaration when accepting the Term of Office at the Annual Town Council Meeting:
- "I [name] having been elected to the office of Town Mayor/Chair of Council of the Council of the Town of Hailsham 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 judgement and ability".

**3 The role of the Town Mayor**

- 3.1 The role of Town Mayor is different from the general town councillor role. The Town Mayor, by virtue of the Office, can use their position to stimulate community pride, encourage business and promote the voluntary sector, among other things. The Town Mayor may also have numerous meetings with dignitaries and other members of the public, engagements to which they are invited, and is in the public eye on a regular basis.

3.2 With this in mind, the Town Mayor needs to demonstrate a keen and genuine interest in those they meet, show enthusiasm and commitment to the role, ensure they are non-party political, promote the town's interests wherever possible and always be mindful of the dignity of the Mayoral Office.

## **4 The Deputy Town Mayor**

4.1 The Deputy Town Mayor is also elected by members of the Council at the Annual Meeting of the Full Town Council in May of each year, immediately following receipt of the Town Mayor's declaration of acceptance of office.

4.2 The Deputy Town Mayor is entitled to discharge all the functions of the Town Mayor if for any reason the Town Mayor is unable to act or the office of Town Mayor is vacant, and they will take the Chair at a Council meeting accordingly, in the absence of the Town Mayor.

4.3 The Deputy Town Mayor should only attend functions as deputy to the Town Mayor when requested to do so and not in their own right. Invitations to functions should not be sent to the Deputy Town Mayor and any received should be passed to the Mayor's Secretary as early as possible, who will in turn liaise with the Town Mayor.

## **5 Partners**

5.1 The Town Mayor is referred to as 'Town Mayor', whatever their gender. A female partner of the Town Mayor is usually referred to as 'Mayoress' or 'Town Mayoress' and a male partner is usually referred to as 'Consort' or 'Town Mayor's Consort'.

5.2 The partner has no standing or executive powers, although the supporting role is fully appreciated. On occasions when the official Mayoress/Consort is not available to accompany the Town Mayor to a function or engagement, the Town Mayor may ask another person to accompany them, e.g. a member of the Town Mayor's family, a town councillor, council officer or a personal friend.

## **6. What is expected of the Town Mayor**

Throughout your term of office, you will be required to undertake the following:

- Carry out your civic duties in a politically impartial and neutral manner.
- Chair and preside over Full Town Council meetings positively and assertively with guidance from the Town Clerk as required.
- Promote Hailsham on a local and regional level.
- Take an active interest in all aspects of the local community and related issues.
- Have the ability to network and socialise without prejudice with all stakeholders and other members of the local community.

- As 'first citizen', act as an ambassador for Hailsham Town Council and welcome visitors and dignitaries.
- Attend various functions, engagements and local events.
- Attend memorial services as a representative of the Town Council.
- Officiate at opening ceremonies and be prepared to make a speech.
- Host receptions and make official visits when required.

## **7 Powers to act individually**

A Town Mayor & Chair has no power to act individually than any Council member, and has no political dimension. In common with all Council members, the Town Mayor & Chair is not permitted to act individually outside of council policy or resolution but is likely to be the Council member most likely and often delegated to work closely with the Town Clerk.

## **8 Council meetings and decision-making**

8.1 The Town Mayor & Chair is required to chair all meetings of the Full Town Council and therefore should ensure that they are available for all dates given in the civic calendar. If the Town Mayor & Chair is not present at a Council meeting, the Deputy Town Mayor must preside in his or her place.

8.2 The Town Mayor & Chair, if present, must preside at meetings of the Council and has responsibility to encourage full participation in debate and ensure adequate consideration of issues and clear decision-making at these meetings. This includes use of a statutory casting vote, which should be used to break deadlock arising in any situation, and there is case law precedent on acceptable/unacceptable use of the vote.

8.3 The Town Mayor & Chair, if present, must preside at the statutory Annual Town (Electors') Meeting.

## **9 Resignation and election of successor**

9.1 The Town Mayor & Chair officially receives resignations from councillors or the Town Clerk.

9.2 A Town Mayor & Chair continues in that role until formally succeeded by another. If, in an election year, they have not retained their seat in formal public elections, they retain only a casting vote. They preside at the opening of the following Annual Council meeting (usually held in May of each year), and if necessary, use the casting vote to decide the election of their successor. If there is a Deputy Town Mayor, they remain in office until the election of a succeeding Town Mayor & Chair (in case they are needed to preside at that election).

## **10 Working relationship with Town Council staff**

10.1 The Town Mayor & Chair should adhere to the Members-Officer Relations Protocol.

- 10.2 Officers and other members of staff of the Council will support and advise the Town Mayor & Chair in undertaking their duties. However, the Town Mayor & Chair should be careful not to 'instruct' or make requests of staff that are outside of Town Council policy, resolutions made by Council or Committee, or legally delegated functions.
- 10.3 It is essential to communicate on a regular basis, preferably at weekly meetings. Regular liaison with the Town Clerk is also necessary on matters pertaining to the Council. Meetings should always be by appointment wherever possible.

## **11 Attendance at functions**

- 11.1 From time to time, the Town Mayor (or Deputy Town Mayor if the Town Mayor is unavailable) will be invited to events and engagements. The correct protocol must be observed when attending these functions.

### *General information*

- 11.2 In order that proper arrangements can be made, including civic engagement planning and publicity, individuals, businesses or organisations are asked in the first instance to provide information to the Mayor's Secretary as soon as possible prior to the event which the Town Mayor (or Deputy Town Mayor if the Town Mayor is unavailable) is invited to attend. Information should include the following:
- 11.2.1 General event details including the date, time of arrival, event start time, (estimated) event finish time, venue/location, purpose of event/engagement and the name of the individual or organisation inviting the Town Mayor to the event/engagement.
- 11.2.2 Information regarding the content matter of any speeches or responses the Town Mayor is expected to deliver.
- 11.2.3 Details of any special requests, for example, the need to make a presentation, supply gifts, wear full or partial regalia, etc.
- 11.2.4 Details regarding practical considerations, for example, car parking available for the Town Mayor.

### *Procedure with Council Officers*

- 11.3 The Town Mayor's diary is managed by the Mayor's Secretary (Civic Officer). Regular diary meetings with the Town Mayor are held to review invitations received.
- 11.4 All invitations to events/engagements which are to be attended by the Town Mayor (and in his/her absence/unavailability, the Deputy Town Mayor) must be directed to the Mayor's Secretary in the first instance, with the above information provided. Those inviting the Town Mayor to an event/engagement will be notified as to his/her availability to attend by the Mayor's Secretary as soon as possible.
- 11.5 If the Town Mayor receives invitations directly, they should refer these to the Mayor's Secretary as appropriate.

11.6 On receipt of an invitation, the Mayor's Secretary will discuss with the Town Mayor if they are able to attend and reply accordingly.

#### *Other information*

11.7 There are no strict rules about which invitations should be accepted and which should be declined. This, ultimately, is for the Town Mayor to decide. Some caution should be exercised having regard to the fact that they are representing the Town Council and is not attending in the capacity as an individual.

11.8 Where there are timetable clashes, illness or any other reason why the Town Mayor is unable to attend a function, the Deputy Town Mayor may be invited to attend in his/her place if available.

11.9 All hosts receive advice on receiving the Town Mayor and the usual protocol. Additionally, the Mayor's Secretary will seek information on dress-code, whether the Mayor should be accompanied, and whether a speech, opening or other official undertaking is expected.

11.10 If the Town Mayor needs any special assistance at an event or has special dietary requirements, they should ensure that the Mayor's Secretary is given as much notice as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made with the host.

11.11 In the event of cancelling attendance at a function due to ill health or unforeseen circumstances, it is important to give as much notice as possible to enable the Mayor's Secretary to arrange for a replacement, normally the Deputy Town Mayor, to attend and to inform the function organiser accordingly.

#### *High Ranking Visitors*

11.12 Where a distinguished visitor (e.g. high-ranking Officer of the Armed Forces or Lord Lieutenant) is attending a civic ceremony or service and the Council considers them worthy of the honour, they may be invited to walk in procession behind the Town Mayor.

## **12 Promotion and publicity of the Town Mayor's activities**

12.1 Should the Town Mayor wish for their activities at a function to be promoted via the Town Council's publicity channels (local press, Council website and social media), full details of the event/function/engagement of which the Town Mayor has agreed to attend must be directed to the Communications Officer as early as possible prior to the event/function taking place (where possible, at least 5 working days), to ensure adequate time to prepare necessary publicity.

### **13 Town Mayor's Allowance**

13.1 The Town Mayor's allowance is provided by the Council to enable the Town Mayor to entertain guests and fulfil the role of Town Mayor associated with such events.

13.2 The Chairman's allowance is a legal requirement referred to in The Local Government Act 1972, ss15(5) and (34)5.

13.3 The Town Council's Mayoral Allowance is expected to cover the costs associated with the office of Town Mayor such as:

- Travelling to and from functions that the Town Mayor has been invited to in his/her capacity as Town Mayor
- To cover other costs of attending functions, including the purchase of raffle tickets or other such costs where appropriate
- To provide suitable attire to wear to official functions and mayoral events
- One-off events held by the Town Mayor.

13.4At the end of any mayoral and financial year, unspent amounts from the allowance may be used for other purposes such as, for example, donation to local organisations as 'grants'. However, in accordance with legislation regarding individual decisions by town councillors, and the Council's Standing Orders, this needs to be decided by resolution of the Council or delegated committee and should be in accordance with any existing Council Grants Policy.

#### *Other allowance factors*

13.5A Council may authorise a budget for expenditure on mayoral/civic/ceremonial activities and may allow some discretion on the part of the Town Mayor in that expenditure. However, this must comply with all other financial regulations or council resolutions, operating in consultation with the Responsible Finance Officer and including appropriate minimal thresholds.

### **14 Chain of Office/civic regalia**

14.1 The mayoral regalia comprise of a chain of office for the Town Mayor and a badge and chain for the Deputy Town Mayor.

14.2 The Town Mayor would normally wear the regalia at functions to which they are invited where these take place within the parish boundaries. The Mayor's Secretary will seek advice if there is any ambiguity.

14.3Where functions take place outside parish boundaries, it is custom to ask permission from the Mayor or Chair of the parish concerned before regalia is worn.

14.4 Civic regalia is to be worn only when on official Council business. The use of the regalia for personal purposes is not permitted.

14.5 The chains and badges of office are of significant value and should therefore be treated with care and respect. Preferably, they should be worn on arrival at a function and removed at the end of the function. They should never be left unattended.