



STURMINSTER NEWTON TOWN COUNCIL

CIVIC PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION

This protocol is produced to guide the Mayor/Deputy Mayor and anyone representing Sturminster Newton Town Council in their Civic duties. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's Standing Orders, Code of Conduct and Financial Regulations.

2. THE ROLE OF THE MAYOR

2.1 The Importance and Role of The Mayor Today

The power of the Mayor has undoubtedly reduced throughout the centuries, but the Office continues to have a central part to play in modern Local Councils and modern society and part of this role is as a result of the traditions it inherits.

The Mayor represents the town and its people and the Office is held in respect. They chair Full Council Meetings. The Mayor should adopt an impartial role in discharging the duties of the Office and be scrupulously fair in conducting business at formal meetings of the Council.

The Mayor can use their position to inspire community pride. They should enhance the image of the Council by ensuring the dignity of the office and promoting the accessibility of the office to the public. Finally, the Mayor should participate in the Council's initiatives, promoting the council, supporting its values, aims and vision.

A modern role for the Mayor is that the Office symbolises an open society. Prior to the 20th century, the choice of Mayor was very restricted but today can come from any class, gender or ethnic background, reflecting the more open and democratic society that we live in.

Social engagements that are undertaken by a Mayor are an expression of giving cohesion to the life of the town. They can act as a link between the various organisations that they visit and can feed back the views and concerns of the people.

2.2 Ceremonial Role of The Mayor

- To be the representative for the Town Council, the community and local democracy and to work to ensure that the dignity and impartiality of the Office of Mayor is upheld.
- To promote the Council's policies and good name at home and elsewhere.
- To host all the Council's civic events.
- To act as the Council's ambassador in promoting the town.
- When invited to attend events within the Town Council's area, often associated with charitable and voluntary organisations, the Mayor should afford them due recognition for their valuable contributions to the wellbeing of the local community.

2.3 Civic Role of The Mayor as Chairman of The Council

- To uphold and promote the Council's standing orders and governance documents when chairing Full Council meetings.
- To preside over meetings of the Full Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and observing the rights of Councillors and in the interest of the community.
- To promote public involvement in the Council's activities.
- To be the conscience of the Council.
- To call extra meetings of Council if necessary, subject to proper procedures being followed as defined in the Council's Standing Orders.

When giving a report at Full Council meetings. The Mayor's report must be limited to matters directly related to the mayoral role, including civic events attended on behalf of the Council. Any additional information not pertaining to official mayoral duties should be given separately.

2.4 Mayor's Role in the Chairing of Meetings

It is recommended that prior to taking up office, that the person undertakes training in chairing skills. However, any relevant pre-existing skills and abilities will be taken into account.

A Chairman's responsibility is to ensure the proper conduct of meetings. They may exercise a second or casting vote in the event of a tie in votes on any question to be decided at meetings. For other matters they have the same rights as other Councillors.

The Chairman is required to ensure that the business considered at a meeting is lawful and that the conduct and/or order of the meeting is proper. A Chairman's authority in respect of the conduct and procedure of meetings is detailed in the Council's Standing Orders.

Individual Councillors and the public present at the meeting are expected to respect and ultimately obey a Chairman's ruling.

A Chairman is required to:

- Ensure that motions included in the agenda are lawful and within the remit of the meeting being convened in advance of a meeting.
- Ensure the minutes of the previous meeting are duly approved by the meeting.
- Regulate the conduct of the meeting.
- Introduce motions in the agenda and direct them to be moved and duly considered.
- Put motions to a vote and, if necessary, exercise their casting vote.
- Declare the result of a vote.
- Order discussions and debate.
- Adjourn the meeting if necessary.
- Close a meeting after its business has been concluded.

2.5 The Mayor's responsibility to the Town Council

The Mayor represents the town of Sturminster Newton at all times, and not just at civic engagements or at council meetings. They may be recognised and approached by members of the community at any time.

The Mayor's attire and behaviour play a significant role in shaping public perception - always remember that the way the Mayor acts, dresses and behaves might impact on the Town Council.

The Mayor should act primarily as a representative of the Town Council, rather than promoting their individual position as a Councillor.

2.6 Mayoress/Consort/Escort

If the Mayor chooses to appoint a consort or escort, the role may be undertaken by a spouse, partner, friend or relative and is accorded precedence alongside the Mayor. A Mayoress must be married to or in a Civil Partnership with the Mayor and cannot simply be the Mayor's partner.

It is generally understood that they will provide assistance as follows:

- Personal support to the Mayor
- Accompany the Mayor on engagements
- Observance of civic protocol
- Support with Mayor's charities.

In carrying out their roles, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Mayoress, Consort or Escorts, should consider the public nature of their office and not bring the Council into disrepute. They should follow the advice and guidance in this protocol where appropriate. On occasions when the Mayoress/Consort is unable to escort the Mayor to an appointment, the Mayor can choose to either attend alone or take another person to escort them.

3. THE ROLE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR

There are two elements to the role of Deputy Mayor:

- To deputise for the Mayor at their request when the Mayor is unable to fulfil an engagement.
- To support the Mayor at major civic events organised by the Council.

The Deputy Mayor will deputise for the Mayor at functions that they are unable to attend. Invitations to events that the Mayor is unable to attend will be passed to the Deputy Mayor at the discretion of the Mayor, via the Mayor's Secretary.

The Deputy Mayor will also deputise at Full Council if the Mayor is unable to attend.

4. THE FORM OF ADDRESS OF THE MAYOR

The Mayor of Sturminster Newton, Councillor.....

5. PHOTOGRAPHY

The Mayor, Mayoress, Mayor's Consort/Escort, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Mayoress/Consort/Escort accept that it is highly likely photographs will be taken at public and civic events throughout the year and used for publicity with or without consent.

6. INVITATIONS

All who seek the Mayor's presence at their events must be referred to the Mayor's Secretary, including those that arise internally from officers or councillors.

Occasionally the Mayor will be approached in person, by letter/email, over the phone, by representatives of a charity or an organisation asking them to attend a function. In this instance it is necessary to refer the person to the Mayor's Secretary who can advise on the availability of the Mayor, inform the charity/organisation of the proper procedures and send out a function questionnaire form for completion where appropriate. The questionnaire helps the Mayor to prepare a speech and to know what is expected in advance of their visit. In the absence of the Mayor's Secretary, another member of staff will be allocated to assist the Mayor and deal with correspondence.

Invitations for Sturminster Newton events and engagements always take precedence over engagements outside Sturminster Newton's boundary. An engagement, once accepted, should not be cancelled except for most important reasons and under no circumstances swapped for a later invitation that is received and is more appealing. The organiser of each event sees theirs as being the most important and this must be remembered. The Mayor should attend punctually (but not too early) and be ready to take their place at the appointed time, complete with chains if advised.

If the invitation includes an escort, the Mayor or Deputy Mayor must only take one person to the event unless the invitation is for Mayor / Deputy and family.

7. MAYOR'S CIVIC STAFF

7.1 Role of Mayor's Secretary

- Maintaining the Mayor's diary and responding to invitations.
- Organising Annual Civic Functions.
- General administrative support to the Mayor.

The Mayor's Secretary is available by email for Civic Support during office hours, and available for face-to-face meetings by prior appointment. An appointment for such meetings should be booked in advance to take into account the effective management of the secretary's workload and other responsibilities. Do not contact the Mayor's Secretary outside of these hours.

7.2 Performing the Role

Mayor/Deputy Mayor Invitations

Invitations are kept in a folder in the Council Offices and act as the Mayor/Deputy Mayor's diary. Invitations are also emailed to the Mayor/Deputy Mayor. Function questionnaires are sent, where appropriate following receipt of an invitation.

8. CLOTHING

The Mayor is expected to be well dressed and presentable at all events, engagements and Council meetings.

9. CHAINS AND BADGES

9.1 Wearing the Chains of Office

The Mayor should not wear the Chain of Office outside the Sturminster Newton Parish boundary without the express permission of the civic body for that Parish being visited.

The Mayoral chain should be worn during Full Council meetings and to civic occasions in Sturminster Newton. It may be worn at other events if requested and an official invitation has been received. Civic invitations usually include details of what should be worn to the event.

The mayoral chain must not be worn to events if the Mayor has not received an official invitation.

The Consort's chain should be worn by the person attending civic events with the Mayor or representing the Mayor in their absence.

9.2 Safe Custody Guidelines

The Council has a set of guidelines for the custody and safekeeping of the Civic Regalia.

Responsibilities

The Council will:

- Maintain insurance cover for all civic regalia.
- Be responsible for the maintenance of the regalia, including any damage or wear and tear.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will:

- Ensure the regalia is not left in an unattended vehicle unless all the doors, windows and other means of access have been secured and locked, all keys of the vehicle removed to a place of safety and the regalia is placed in the boot or out of sight.
- Ensure that the regalia is returned to the Council Offices as soon as possible after an event.
- Not attempt to clean the regalia other than with a soft cloth. Any damage or wear and tear should be reported to the Mayor's Secretary as soon as possible.
- Not loan the regalia or place in the custody of any other person other than Council Office Staff.
- Inform the Town Clerk immediately if their Chains of Office are lost, mislaid, stolen or otherwise missing, in order that the Council's insurers can be informed.

10.FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 Civic Budget

The Civic budget should be used by the Mayor for the following expenditure:

- Travel expenses to events outside the Sturminster Newton ward,
- Ticket purchase to events where an invitation has been received and they are required to pay for their own meal,
- Flower bouquets and gifts presented on behalf of The Town Council,
- The Mayor's Christmas cards,
- Maintenance of the chain of office,
- Any events that the Mayor holds on behalf of the council, e.g. Civic Day.

Expenditure should be in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

10.2 Mayor's Christmas Card

The Mayor may send out a formal Christmas Card. It is recommended that, where possible, this should be an eCard. Any cost of providing the cards will be met by the Civic budget. The Mayor will discuss the design of the card with the Mayor's Secretary.

10.3 Gifts

The Mayor is sometimes required to present gifts. The Mayor will be informed of these occasions in advance. A gift will be purchased with funds from the Civic budget.

Minor tokens of goodwill or flowers can be accepted as personal gifts. The Code of Conduct states: "Councillors must register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt."

11.ANNUAL CIVIC DAY

The Annual Civic Day can be held at any time during the Mayoral year. The day may be a chance to show local dignitaries the delights of Sturminster Newton, promote civic pride and develop inter- town relationships or a community event. It is up to each Mayor to decide whether they want to host a Civic Day. The day (or evening) can consist of visits to local business, points of interest, lunch out, a local talk, a walkabout, church service etc. It is up to the Mayor what they would like to include in their day.

12.SPEECHES

The Mayor should write their own speeches. If they feel they are lacking in background information for an engagement, they should ask the Mayor's Secretary to contact the organisation for further details.

12.1 Being Prepared to Speak

The Mayor should read all the information provided prior to attending an appointment and make sure they are fully prepared. Sometimes the Mayor is asked to speak without notice.

Be prepared to speak with little notice - prepare a standard short speech that can be used at any function.

12.2 When Speaking

- Look pleased about having to speak and remember the points made earlier about representing the Town Council.
- Do not partake in a large quantity of alcohol (keep a clear head).
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Smile when speaking.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Look at your audience.

13. PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Special conditions apply to the issue of publicity in the period leading up to elections.

During the period leading up to an election, the Council must take special care not to issue any publicity that might conceivably be perceived as having the potential to influence the outcome of the poll. This period is a minimum of six weeks before the election date.

The Mayor must ensure the dates of major civic events are arranged to ensure there is no conflict with the pre-election period.

Details can be found in the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Local Government Act 1986 and the Local Authority Publicity Code of Recommended Practice published in 2011.

Adopted: 23rd July 25

Review Due: July 27