



# FROME TOWN COUNCIL

## Chapter 6

### 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.

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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 Chairman 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 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 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 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 Frome 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 Frome Town Council"*

The Declaration of Acceptance of Offer is signed by both the new Mayor and the Chief Executive 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 Council's Strategic Plan contains the following objective:

**4.2 To arrange FTC'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 Frome, 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 he/she accompanies the Mayor on Civic engagements.

When representing Frome 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 Frome 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 a tie
- The Mayor should ensure, together with the Chief Executive, that the Council makes legal decisions
- The Mayor has a duty to ensure the agenda is followed correctly

## **5 CIVIC AFFAIRS SUB COMMITTEE**

The Mayor shall automatically be designated the Chairman of the Civic Affairs Sub Committee with the Deputy Mayor serving as Vice Chairman, unless either Member does not wish to take up the post.

The Sub Committee's role and Terms of Reference are as follows:

- To maintain and monitor civic traditions of the town
- To maintain the Mayoral regalia and determine the acceptance of items in to the town's regalia
- To act as an advisory body on all matters related to the Mayoralty
- To recommend to Full Council any changes to the Mayor's Allowances

- To review and monitor spend of the Civic Affairs Sub Committee in line with the Civic Expenses (cost centre 103) budget
- To arrange any event deemed by the Policy and Finance Committee to be a Mayoral led event, with the exception of the Christmas Spectacular
- To oversee Mayoral charitable or fundraising projects
- To propose and decide recipients of the annual civic awards
- To organise an annual children's competition to design the Mayor's Official Christmas Card
- To recommend to Full Council awarding special status to any resident who has undertaken extraordinary service to the town

## **6 SUPPORT FOR THE MAYOR**

Day to day support for the Mayor is provided by the Mayor's Secretary under the general direction of the Office Manager. The Mayor's Secretary is an employee of Frome 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 Mayor's Secretary. During the Mayoral year, arrangements will also be made for an official photograph to be taken.

The Mayor is also provided with a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) for use throughout their Term of Office.

The Mayor's Secretary receives invitations for the Mayor by either post, email or fax. As soon as possible the Mayor will be notified of the invite. Events and engagements are logged onto the Mayor's Engagements spreadsheet, found under S:\Central Data\Mayor\Mayors Engagements.

The Mayor should respond whether he wishes to attend and whether he will be taking a consort with him. If the Mayor cannot attend he may request that the Deputy Mayor or another Councillor attend on his behalf.

Once it is confirmed who will be attending, the appropriate response is sent to the host organiser by the Mayor's Secretary 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.

Confirmed events are entered onto the Mayor's electronic calendar on Outlook detailing as much information as possible, the Mayor can view this calendar remotely.

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 office. It is courteous of the Mayor to send a thank you letter to the host after the event.

The Mayor's Secretary will also support and act on the decisions agreed by the Civic Affairs Sub Committee.

## **7 MAYOR'S CHARITY**

The Mayor's charity traditionally raises funds for local charities in the Frome 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 or two or three 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 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.

Other events may be organised by local organisations, clubs or institutions, with proceeds given to the Mayor's charity. If the Mayor wishes to hold his/her own charity function, then he/she must discuss the proposal with the Civic Affairs Sub Committee to be clear as to the full implications of so doing.

### **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:

- Clothing
- Partners clothing

- Donations to charities
- Collections
- Personal hospitality (including lunches and dinners)
- Attendance to engagements
- One-off events held by the Mayor

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 a Civic Functions budget 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 by the Mayor, for example events in 2009 such as the Green Business Seminar, Tour of Britain VIP Breakfast.

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.

## **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.

The Deputy Mayor should not wear the Deputy's Chain of Office in the presence of the Mayor.

## **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.

## **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'. 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 Chief Executive 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 any gifts or hospitality worth £25 or over that are received in connection with their official duties as a Member, 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 Chief Executive.

## **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 Chief Executive and the Mayor's Secretary at the beginning of each new year to suit the Mayor's diary.

### **Civic Service**

The Civic Service is held on the first Sunday of the Frome Festival, usually the first Sunday in July. The format of the service is for the Civic Affairs Sub Committee to agree but tends to be a church service followed by refreshments. It may also involve a Civic procession. Civic dignitaries from our designated list together with leaders of local community groups and organisations, colleagues, friends and family are invited.

Previously the Council's Civic Awards have been presented at the Civic Service.

### **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 Frome, the meeting is organised and chaired by the Mayor and can adopt any format, often presentations showing each Committee's 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, in the past local schools have been used, also more formal meeting spaces such as Rook Lane Chapel or the Assembly Rooms.

### **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 Frome Town Council in memory of those men and women who gave their lives for their country.

### **Charity Event**

If the Mayor has nominated a charity, then an event to raise fund for that nominated charity can be held during the year, subject to available budgets.

NB – All civic events should be discussed and agreed through the Civic Affairs Sub Committee.

### **Miscellaneous Events**

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

Town twinning events – Frome is twinned with the French town of Chateau Gontier, the German town of Murrhardt and the Polish town of Rabka Zdroj.

Opening of and attendance to fayres / garden parties / shows / unveilings etc

Frome Festival Launch

Presenting Awards and Prizes to individuals and community organisations

Events, exhibitions and presentations at local schools

Christmas Spectacular and the Christmas lights “Switch On”

FTC organised events e.g. the Velo Jam, Cobble Wobble

Other Council’s Civic Services, Civic Events and Charity Fundraising 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.

## FROME TOWN COUNCIL - CIVIC PRIDE

### History

The Parish Vestry was replaced by the Frome Local Board in 1865. In 1895 Frome Urban District Council was established. In 1974 under the major reorganisation of local government Frome Town Council became a Parish Council within Mendip District Council.

### The Coat of Arms

The shield is black (sable), a colour chosen because it is common to the arms of both the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers, a reminder of our connection with the cloth industry, and the Leversedge family who were Lords of the Manor in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.

The inverted double chevron is one white (ermine) on top of a gold (or) one. The ermine chevron and the gold tassel at the base are taken from the Clothworkers arms - the tassel is a thistle head used to raise the nap on woollen cloth. The ermine chevron is a reference to Bishop Ken finally buried at St. John's Church in 1711. Similarly the gold chevron is from the Leversedge arms. Above the chevron are two willows (sallow), a reference to the forest of Selwood - "Sallow Wood", a hunting forest in Saxon and Norman times.

The crest above the shield is a helmet (helm) with a closed visor and mantling in black and gold. The closed helm signifies that the arms belong to a corporation, in this case the local Council, rather than an individual. On top of the helm is a gold Saxon crown, reference to Frome's connection with Saxon kings; King Athelstan held an assembly (witan) in Frome in 934, and King Eadred died here in 955. The Red Dragon (gules) rising from the crown is the Wessex Dragon, also used on the arms of Somerset. It holds a gold crosier, the shepherd's crook associated with bishops, and refers to the Abbey of Cirencester, to which the church of St. John's was granted in 1133.

The motto below the shield, "Time Trieth Troth" is from the Hungerford family. They were major landowners locally in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It means "time will tell how trustworthy you are".

The arms were designed by H. Ellis Tomlinson, who also designed those of Bridgwater, Crewkerne and Bathavon.

### Badges of Office

The Mayor's badge of office is a replica of the coat of arms in enamelled and gilded solid silver. It was presented to the Frome Urban District Council by the Chamber of Commerce and the late Mr T H Vincent of the well known Frome jewellers on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1954.

In 1957, a gilt chain was added to the badge, provided by J.W. Singer and Sons Ltd., and subscriptions from Members of the Council. The badge was worn by the Council's Chairman at all official functions. At the re-organisation of local government in 1974, Frome elected to have a Town Council and the chain is now worn by the Mayor as its chief citizen. The links of the chain are engraved with the names of past Mayors.

The Deputy Mayor's badge is silver with an enamelled coat of arms and is mounted on flat black braid. This badge was purchased from the renowned regalia jewelers, Fattorini, in 2006.

All past Mayor's are offered a medal of silver gilt with an enamelled coat of arms and an engraved title bar in recognition of their service.

The consort chain and badge was presented to Frome Town council by the late Mr John and Miss Joy Vincent in December 1992, renewing the link between the Council regalia and the jewellery business. The badge and chain are silver and a replica of the Mayor's badge with the coat of arms engraved on it.

There is also a consort medal similar to the past Mayor's medal which a Mayor's consort may prefer to wear instead of the silver chain and badge.