

Frome Town Council

Chapter 6

Civic Protocol

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1 Introduction

This Civic Protocol has been produced to assist the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor(s) 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 staff 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 protocol and 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 Chair 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 Chair.

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 hours, different restraints etc. However, it is also most probably a hugely enjoyable and rewarding role if entered into in the right spirit.

The Mayor is elected by Frome Town Council at the Annual Town Council Meeting in May. A new Deputy Mayor(s) is also elected at this meeting.

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.

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 a Frome Town 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 Town Clerk, that the Council makes legal decisions
- The Mayor has a duty to ensure the agenda is followed correctly

4 Support for the Mayor

Day to day support for the Mayor is provided by a member of staff under the general direction of the Town Clerk

All correspondence for the Mayor is kept in the town office.

5 Mayor's Charity

The Mayor may appoint a charity to support during their time 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.

6 Mayor's allowance

The Mayor may be paid an allowance to meet the expenses of their office it is commonly described as recompense for the expenses of maintaining the dignity of the Office.

7 Support by Deputy Mayor(s)

The Cllrs(s) elected as Deputy Mayor(s) 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(s) must preside.

8 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.

9 Precedence and Protocol

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 Cllrs should treat with extreme caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that is made to them personally.

The Code of Conduct requires Cllrs, including Mayors, to register any gifts or hospitality worth £25 or over that are received in connection with their official duties as a Cllr, 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 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 Mayor's Secretary at the beginning of each new year to suit the Mayor's diary.

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.

The meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June each year and the venue is open to discussion.

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.

12 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 can make a short speech of thanks.

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 teasel at the base are taken from the Clothworkers arms - the teasel 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 6th 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 Mayors 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.