



## **BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

## **MAYOR'S HANDBOOK**

## **Introduction**

The aim of this handbook is to provide an explanation about the role of the Mayor. It also provides guidance to an incoming Mayor with advice and support as they plan and work through their civic year. This will commence at the Town Council's Annual General Meeting in one year and conclude the following May at the next Annual General Meeting when they hand over to their successor.

## **Role of the Mayor**

The Mayor is elected by the Full Council at the Annual General Meeting held in May each year. A new Deputy Mayor is also elected at this meeting. The new Mayor makes a declaration of Acceptance of Office when accepting the Term of Office at the Annual General Meeting. The Mayor's term of office is for one year and during this time the Mayor will continue to be a member of the Council and presides over meetings of the Council.

The role of the Mayor is principally a ceremonial one, acting as host on behalf of the Town Council at civic functions by invitation, both within and outside of the town area.

The role of Mayor does not confer any powers to be exercised other than those at a Town Council meeting as set out below. During the civic year the Mayor undertakes official openings or presentations both within Blyth and throughout the County.

The Mayor receives invitations to a range of events and every invitation is considered equally. If the Mayor cannot attend a function, the Deputy Mayor may attend on behalf of the Mayor. The Mayor may choose a Consort. This can either be a partner, fellow Councillor, family member or friend.

## **Considerations**

Anyone chosen, or considering putting themselves forward for the role of Mayor needs to bear in mind that the role is different to that of a Councillor. The role can be physically and mentally tiring and will undoubtedly have an impact on family and friends due to the time spent carrying out Mayoral duties. However, the role can also be hugely enjoyable and rewarding.

## **Potential Impact**

Discussions would need to take place with the Mayor's employer regarding any provision they could make to allow the Mayor to fulfil this public role.

## **Duties which the Mayor may carry out include**

- Acting as host on behalf of the Town Council at civic functions.
- Attending functions by invitation within the Town Council area or the County and at times outside of the County area.
- Undertaking official openings or presentations at places throughout Blyth or the County, and at times outside the County area. When representing the Town Council the Mayor would normally wear the official chain of office at all official functions within the Town.

When the official chain of office is worn the wearer should be addressed as Mayor. The chain would normally also be worn at functions outside of the Town Council area when invited in an official capacity.

It is the responsibility of the Mayor to undertake the safe keeping of the mayoral chain or to collect and deposit it from the Town Council office following use at any function.

The Mayor also has a number of statutory functions to undertake as set out below:

- If present at Town Council meetings, must chair the meeting. (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12, paragraph 5 (1)).
- Has a casting vote in the event of a tie in any voting at a Town Council meeting.
- Should ensure together with the Town Clerk that the Council makes legal decisions.
- Has a duty to ensure that the items in the Agenda are properly followed.
- If the Mayor is not present at a Council meeting, the Deputy Mayor has to preside.

## **Ceremonial Role of the Mayor**

- To serve the residents of Blyth.
- The Mayor is the figurehead and public face of Blyth Town Council.
- To act as the Council's ambassador in promoting the Town.
- Attending events and functions organised by other organisations etc.
- Attending Council approved events and functions outside of the Town
- Council area organised by other organisations and bodies.

There are Chains of Office to wear and protocols to follow. These chains are heavy and not particularly easy to attach – assistance is required. The chains come in a storage case and it is the responsibility of the Mayor to undertake the safe keeping of the chains or to collect and deposit it from the Town Council office following use at any function. Traditionally the Ceremonial robes are worn for the Remembrance Sunday Service.

**The Mayor should undertake the following duties in order of priority as set out below:**

- Attending and chairing Town Council meeting.
- Attending and chairing the monthly meetings of the Town Clerk & Chairs of Committees.

It is expected that the Mayor will open/attend a number of events delivered by Blyth Town Council during the year of office. These include:

- Events organised by the Town Council, e.g. Fireworks Display, Christmas Lights Switch On
- Blyth in Bloom Presentation Evening
- Remembrance Service
- Town Twinning Civic Dinner

**Meet the Mayor Sessions**

The Mayor may also wish to organise a series of “Meet the Mayor” sessions during his term of office. These sessions could be used to share information with residents as well as listen to any concerns or issues they may have. It is expected that they would be held at different venues in the town to ensure all age groups etc have the opportunity to attend.

The Office Manager will liaise and co-ordinate with both the Mayor, and Deputy Mayor regarding attendance at functions etc.

**Mayor’s Allowance**

An allowance of £1,500 is allocated each year by the Town Council to assist in performing civic duties. It is paid twice per year on receipt of the precept and can be used for the following kinds of costs:

- Tickets to fundraising events
- Raffle tickets
- Mayoral receptions
- Clothing
- Mileage/travelling

**The Mayor’s Consort**

The Mayor may choose a Consort who could either be a partner, fellow Councillor, family member or friend. This may be difficult for certain individuals who are suddenly thrust into the public eye. Attendance at public events is entirely at the Consort's discretion. Although the role has no Civic standing the support given to the Mayor is invaluable and only the Mayoress/Consort shall wear the official ribbon provided.

### **Relationship with the Press**

The press may ask the Mayor to comment on issues. As civic representative the Mayor should only speak about matters directly relating to their fundraising activities or events which they are attending. All other media requests should be forwarded the Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk.

### **Reporting to the Council**

The Mayor is asked to provide and update at each Full Town Council meeting.

### **Mayor as Chair of the Council**

- Is seen as the Principal Councillor representing Blyth Town Council to outside bodies and is the interface between the Council and the public.
- The main duty is to preside over Full Town Council meetings and the Mayor must be obeyed when issuing lawful direction in line with Standing Orders.
- May be asked for a statement on behalf of the Council but should only express the agreed views of the Council, not personal views. The Chair cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council.

### **Public Meetings and Politics**

Once appointed the Mayor is apolitical and should not get involved in controversial organisations. The Mayor, as Mayor, should not take part in a political conference other than to open it. The Mayor is at liberty to chair any Public meeting although it is advisable not to get embroiled in anything likely to be too controversial.

The Mayor is traditionally neutral and steps back from politics for the full term of office. The Mayor would still have a vote in Council and continue to play a role in the decision making of the Council.

### **Being a Mayor during Purdah (the run up to Council Elections)**

During the run up to elections, the period officially known as purdah, there are statutory guidelines the Town Council must follow regarding publicity. Guidance should be sought from the Town Clerk to ensure that

the Mayor operates within the guidelines. Unlike all Councillors who cease office 4 days after the election, the Mayor remains in Office until his/her successor is appointed at the Council's AGM.

### **Gifts to the Mayor**

If there is any doubt as to whether a gift is personal or for the town, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk.

For gifts which are deemed as personal the Mayor will need to follow the rules which apply to all Councillors in that they must declare gifts or hospitality received in their capacity as Councillor (please refer to the Council's Gifts and Hospitality Policy for further advice).

### **Administrative Assistance**

Day to day administrative support for the Mayor is provided by the Office Manager. This Officer will deal with most correspondence to the Mayor, normally invitations to attend various functions. The Office Manager will prepare as much guidance information as possible regarding any function. Where the Mayor receives invitations directly, these should be passed on to the Office Manager for attention. If the Mayor is unavailable for a period of time the Office Manager should be notified, giving as much notice as possible.

### **Personal and Religious Beliefs**

The elected Mayor, as the "Principal Person of Blyth" represents all sections of the community and shows favouritism to no-one. It is the Mayor's role to acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity in the locality. The office of the Mayor belongs to the public, not the individual who occupies it or the Officers who advise it.

### **Life outside of the Mayoral Role**

The Mayor needs to be conscious of, and act within the Councillors Code of Conduct, constantly bearing in mind the high expectations the public have of the Mayor, particularly in terms of acceptable behaviour.

The Deputy Mayor would also be expected to follow this protocol.