

Civic Information

The Role of the Town Mayor

Background

Being 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, and 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 General Meeting in May. A new Deputy Mayor is also elected at this meeting. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office is signed by both the new Mayor and the Town Clerk. The new Deputy Mayor also signs a 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. The new Mayor may present the previous Mayor with a Past Mayor's badge at the Annual General Meeting.

The Town Mayor

The Town Mayor will act with the authority of, and be responsible to, the Town Council. The Town Mayor will preside at any meeting of the Town Council at which he/she is present. The Town Mayor has the power to keep order during the meeting; to adjourn the meeting; to order the removal of a disorderly person from the meeting; and to give rulings on points of order. The duties of the Town Mayor (although not prescribed by law) are:-

- To ensure that a meeting is properly constituted and a quorum is present
- To observe all statutory rules and standing orders governing the meeting
- To take items on the agenda in order, varying them only with the consent of the meeting
- To give the opportunity for speakers to express their views
- To discourage irrelevant discussion
- To conduct the meeting properly by putting motions and amendments
- To preserve order
- To make sure decisions reached are strictly relevant and are clear and precise
- To ensure that matters under discussion appear on the agenda

The position of Town Mayor confers no additional advantages or authority other than the honour of representing the town of Thame, however when in Council the Town Mayor has the right to provide a "casting vote" in order to achieve a majority decision.

During the Civic year the Town Mayor supports a wide variety of events and receives invitations to all kinds of events, functions and engagements and every invitation is considered equally. If the Town Mayor cannot attend a function the Deputy Mayor may be asked to attend on his/her behalf.

Duties which the Town Mayor may carry out include:

- Acting as host on behalf of the Council at functions organised by the Council
- Attending functions and engagements within Thame 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 Town Mayor's chosen charities
- Representing the Council during royal, celebrity or VIP visits to the town.

The Town Mayor will choose his/her own consort who can be either a spouse/partner, fellow Councillor, family member or friend. The consort is referred to as the Town Mayor's Consort and should be given equivalent respect and dignity whenever he/she accompanies the Town Mayor on Civic engagements.

When representing the Town Council the Town Mayor and Consort will usually wear the official Chains of Office. The Chains of Office will normally be worn at all official functions within Thame 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.

Support for The Mayor

Day to day support for the Town Mayor is provided by the Office Administration Officer under the general direction of the Office Manager. As well as carrying out other duties for the Council, the Officer assists the Town Mayor with organising their Term of Office.

The Officer receives invitations for the Town Mayor by post or email. As soon as possible the Town Mayor will be notified of the invite and should respond whether he/she wishes to attend and whether he/she will be taking a Consort. If the Town Mayor cannot attend he/she may request that the Deputy Mayor or another councillor attend on his/her behalf.

Once confirmed who will be attending the appropriate response is sent to the host organiser by the Office Administration Officer who will check on any other details regarding the event e.g. is a speech needed, prize giving, dress code, Chains of Office, transport, parking arrangements, etc. Confirmed events are put onto the Town Mayor's electronic calendar on Outlook detailing as much information as possible. An official photographer may be appointed to cover official events that the Town Mayor may attend.

Mayor's Charity

The Town Mayor's charity traditionally raises funds for local charities in the Town. The Town Mayor chooses a local charity (or number of charities) to support early on during his/her civic year. It is common to announce the chosen charity or charities at the Annual Meeting of the Council when the Town Mayor is elected. The chosen charity will then be notified and all funds raised at specified events will be donated to the Town Mayor's Charitable Account. The money held in the account at the end of the civic year is divided between the chosen charities who are invited to the Annual Meeting of the Council to be presented with a cheque(s).

Funds raised for the Town Mayor's charities cannot be used for any other purpose other than as a donation to the charities identified when the funds were raised.

Donations

To enable the Town Mayor to raise funds for local charities the Council relies on local businesses donating prizes to be used on raffles and tombolas. The Town 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 are more likely to support the charity.

Town Mayor's Allowance

The Town Mayor receives an annual allowance from which expenses connected with carrying out the duties of the Town Mayor are claimed. The Local Government Act does not stipulate the type or category of expenditure for which the Town 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
- Donations to Charities
- Poppy Wreaths
- Collections
- Personal hospitality
- Attendance to engagements
- The official Town Mayor's Christmas card
- Town Mayor's Award

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.

It is important for the Town Mayor to plan the use of the allowance over the year.

The Role of the Deputy Mayor

The Member elected as Deputy Mayor will support the Town Mayor throughout the year by representing the Council when the Town Mayor is unable to. If the Town 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 Town Mayor is present but assumes precedence and standing of the Town Mayor when he/she is deputising for the Town Mayor rather than acting as Deputy.

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

Civic Insignia and Regalia

The Town Mayor's Chain and Badge of Office are the outward signs of the Civic Office held. The Town Mayor should not wear the Civic insignia/regalia in another capacity or another area without express permission from the local town/parish being visited.

Civic Chains should never be worn with a military uniform. However, a Town 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.

Receipt of Gifts

In the course of the duty of being Town Mayor often gifts will be offered to the Town 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 the Town Mayor, to register any gifts or hospitality worth £50 or over that are received in connection with their official duties as a Member. The gift or hospitality must be registered within 28 days of receiving it.

Civic Events

Below is a list of typical events which are organised during the Town Mayor's year in Office. These dates are discussed with the Town Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Office Administration Officer to suit the Town Mayor's diary:

Civic Service

Usually held on a Sunday in September/October – The format of the Service is entirely for the Town Mayor to decide but must be within budget and held within the parish boundary. Civic dignitaries from the Council's designated list together with leaders from local community groups, organisations, colleagues, friends and family should be invited.

Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Sunday is held on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of Armistice Day which is 11 November. The procession and Service is organised by the Royal British Legion in conjunction with the Town Council. The Town Mayor always leads the procession and lays a wreath on behalf of the Town Council in memory of those men and women who gave their lives for their Country.

Armistice Day

11 November at 11am – the Town Mayor leads the town in two minutes silence at the Town Hall.

Christmas Light Switch On

Usually held on the first Friday in December. The Town Mayor leads the town's festivities and switches on the Christmas Lights with invited celebrities.

Civic Ball/Dinner

Usually held in the spring – the Town Mayor chooses the venue, theme, menu and organises any fundraising activity e.g. raffle, auction. The Office Administration Officer will help the Town Mayor with the administration of this event.

Annual Town Meeting

It is a legal requirement that an Annual Town Meeting is held to which all electors are entitled to attend. The meeting is held in the Upper Chamber of the Town Hall on a Tuesday in late April/early May. The meeting is organised and chaired by the Town Mayor and can adopt any format. The Mayor will give a short report of the civic year.

Town Awards

Usually held on a Thursday evening (in July from 2020) at the Barns Centre – the Town Mayor presents the winners of each category with their Award. The winners are chosen by an independent Panel made up from organisations / groups within the community. The Town Mayor may choose to present a special 'Town Mayor's Award' to an individual or group at the Town Awards.

Flag Raising

The Town Mayor maybe asked to raise the flag outside the Town Hall to mark a special day or occasion such as Commonwealth Day, or a joint flag raising with a representative of an organisation such as the launch of the Poppy Appeal, Merchant Navy Day, etc.