



THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF
NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

CODE OF PRACTICE IN
CONNECTION WITH THE
OFFICE OF MAYOR
2013/2014

GUIDANCE NOTES IN CONNECTION WITH THE
OFFICE OF MAYOR 2013/2014

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FOREWORD

As Mayor, you will no doubt wish to set your own seal on your year of office and will decide your own personal priorities for that year.

It is a unique position within the Council and this guidance is designed to give you an insight into the roles and responsibilities of being Mayor.

It provides you with information on the support that is available to help you with the many aspects of the work associated with being Mayor.

It is difficult to fully describe the experience of being Mayor but it is hoped that it is one that you will find enjoyable and rewarding.

**CODE OF PRACTICE IN CONNECTION
WITH THE OFFICE OF MAYOR**

1. **STATUTORY PROVISIONS**

These are contained in Section 2, para. 2.5 and Section 5 in Part 2 of the Council's Constitution.

2. **CHAIRMANSHIP**

When in attendance, the Mayor takes the Chair at all meetings of the Council.

3. **MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Chief Executive and the Head of Legal and Governance are available to discuss with the Mayor any items on the agenda for meetings of the Council prior to the meeting taking place. A Council Minute Book especially for the use of the Mayor at a Council meeting is prepared before each Council meeting together with notes on any items which are likely to be required under the heading 'Mayor's Announcements'.

IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONDUCT OF MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL, THE MAYOR IS ADVISED TO BECOME FULLY CONVERSANT WITH THE COUNCIL'S PROCEDURE RULES, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATING TO QUESTIONS, MOTIONS WHICH MAY BE MOVED WITHOUT NOTICE AND RULES OF DEBATE.

It is strongly recommended that the Mayor meets with the Head of Legal and Governance before the start of his/her Mayoral Year to discuss procedural issues and any concerns that he/she may have concerning Chairmanship of Full Council.

4. **MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS**

Following the election of the Mayor at the Annual Meeting of the Council, it is the recognised practice for the Mayor to make the following appointments:

a) **High Constable** –

The current practice is to appoint a friend or relative of the Mayor to this post. There are no recognised duties other than that the High Constable is expected to be present on a limited number of civic occasions, i.e. parades and major civic events. He does not accompany the Mayor on Mayoral engagements.

b) **Chaplain/Celebrant**

This is usually for the religious belief or conscience with which the Mayor is associated. It is the practice for the Chaplain/Celebrant to take part in the service on the Civic Sunday and should the Mayor wish to say

prayers/expressions of belief/reflections prior to the commencement of Council meetings. If such prayers/expressions of belief or conscience are to take place then there will be a 5 minutes pause before the meeting commences. The Chaplain/Celebrant should also be invited to take part in the annual Remembrance Day parade.

c) Mace Bearers -

Two Mace Bearers are to be appointed. In practice, the appointments of the Mace Bearers for the preceding year are usually renewed. Their duties are to carry the Maces on major civic occasions and at Council meetings. These appointments are arranged by the Head of Legal and Governance.

5. ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING –
ELECTION OF MAYOR AND CIVIC RECEPTION

The election of the Mayor shall be the first business transacted at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

The Mayor shall be elected annually by the Council from among the Councillors and shall, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified, continue in office for a period of one year and shall act until his/her successor becomes entitled to act as Mayor.

Arrangements can, on request, be made for reservations of part of the public gallery to accommodate friends of the Mayor who wish to be present to watch the Mayor-making ceremony at the Annual Council Meeting.

Following the Annual Council Meeting, it is usual for a Civic Reception to be held at a place to be arranged within the Borough. The cost of this function is met from Council funds. There is an official list of about 180 people. Whilst appreciating that the Mayor will wish to invite personal guests to the reception, it is necessary for the total number of invitations from the Mayor to be limited to **30** persons.

6. MAYOR'S SUNDAY

It is usual for the Mayor to hold a civic service shortly after being elected to the office of Mayor. The service is usually held at the Parish Church of St Giles on the first available Sunday following the Annual Council meeting. St Giles is a large church and able to accommodate those wishing to attend. The Mayor's Secretary, who will liaise with the Minister of the Church, makes the arrangements in connection with the service. Afterwards, refreshments are served to the congregation in the Church Hall at the rear of the church.

7. EXPENSES OF OFFICE

An allowance, which is calculated at seventy five percent of Spinal Column Point 3, less tax at the standard rate is made available to the Mayor to meet the expenses of the office of Mayor.

This allowance is to meet expenses on such items as new clothes for the Mayor and Mayoress/Consort, small donations at various functions and the provision of hospitality by the Mayor (see special section on hospitality). It is usual for the Mayor/Council to have special Christmas cards printed for despatch to what may be described as official recipients, e.g. Council Members, in addition to the Mayor's own private list. The cost of these cards, including postage, is borne by the Council. An additional sum is allocated in the estimates available to meet the cost of buying bouquets/baskets of fruit, which are presented by the Mayor at 90th/100th birthdays and at Golden/Diamond Wedding anniversaries.

8. STAFF ASSISTING THE MAYOR

The deployment of staff towards assisting the Mayor in carrying out his/her duties is as follows:

a) General advice and guidance –

The Head of Legal and Governance and, as is more often the case, the Mayor's Secretary.

b) Organisation of all aspects of Mayoral and civic functions/ Mayoral engagements/Administrative support and advice to the Mayor on all associated matters including protocol and etiquette -

Mayor's Secretary/Member Support Officer in the Chief Executive's Directorate. This officer has overall responsibility for the running of the Mayor's office and is available to offer advice on all issues relating to the office. He should be consulted **on all** matters relating to the Mayoralty no matter how small.

In the absence of the Mayor's Secretary, the Member Services Officers are available to give advice.

c) Accompanying the Mayor to functions etc. –

The Mayor's Sergeant is responsible for ensuring that the Mayor arrives for engagements on time and is accorded the precedence due at functions. He also provides support to the Mayor at events held in the Mayor's Parlour although the Mayor's Secretary retains overall responsibility.

9. ROLE OF MAYOR

In general, the Mayor should be prepared to take the lead in all matters of concern in the life of the Borough. The Mayor should also be careful to ensure that he/she does not find himself/herself in some undignified position. The Mayor should also not agree to give patronage to any appeal or society until thoroughly assured as to its bona fides and importance in the Borough. **Further, during the term of office, the Mayor should be, as near as humanly possible, impartial on controversial matters – in particular politics and religion.**

10. CIVIC REGALIA

- Mayoral Robe and Hat –
These are worn on a limited number of civic occasions.
- Mayoral insignia –
The Mayoral Chain is worn on all civic occasions and at all public functions attended by the Mayor inside the Borough. It is permissible, on occasions, for the Mayor, following an official reception, to wear the medallion only. The Mayoral Chain should not be worn at functions held outside the Borough without the consent of the Mayor or the Chairman of the district to be visited. A standing arrangement exists enabling the chain to be worn in Stoke-on-Trent.

A chain is also provided for the Mayoress/Consort, along with a badge. The same conditions apply to its use.

- Mayor's Wand –
This white wand is normally used only at the election of the Mayor and on Civic Sunday. It is regarded as an emblem of purity and justice.

11. MAYOR'S SERGEANT

The Mayor's Sergeant is appointed for the purpose of acting as attendant to the Mayor. He is required to carry out all instructions, which may be given to him at any time by the Mayor, the Chief Executive and the Mayor's Secretary.

12. MAYORAL CAR

The car is to be used in accordance with the official engagements list which is prepared weekly on Thursday/Friday and issued to the Mayor and appropriate others, and for attending official meetings at the Civic Offices. The Mayor should be aware that journeys to official Mayoral engagements commence either from home or from the Civic Offices. The only exception to this rule is when the Mayor is required to travel between engagements. The car may also be used for the conveyance of Council delegations to meetings where it is felt that this is the most economical and appropriate form of transport. The Mayor's driver is required to keep an accurate record of all journeys.

It is important that the car is only used on the above basis. Elsewhere there has been criticism of the use of Mayoral cars and in some cases this has resulted in investigations and surcharge by the District Auditor who is particularly concerned about journeys beyond an authority's boundaries.

13. ENGAGEMENTS

The Mayor is invited to many functions in an official capacity. **All correspondence is dealt with by the Mayor's Secretary on behalf of the Mayor. To ensure the proper co-ordination of all Mayoral activity no**

engagements should be accepted without the knowledge of the Mayor's Secretary.

Where it is proposed to accept an invitation a questionnaire is sent to the person or organisation from which the invitation has been received. The organisation is required to return the completed questionnaire as soon as possible prior to the date of the function in order that the Mayor can be advised of what is expected and arrangements made accordingly.

When an official invitation is sent to the Mayor, it is undesirable for the Mayor to ask for an extension of the hospitality being provided unless it is felt absolutely essential to do so. Any request from the Mayor is considered in the nature of a command and may, in certain cases, place the person who issues the invitation in a position of difficulty and may possibly result in embarrassment to the Mayor and loss of dignity to the Mayoral position. **Once an invitation is accepted, it is most important that unless something like illness intervenes, the arrangement should be adhered to, since those organising the function attach great importance to the visit of the Mayor and the general arrangements they have made take this into account, including the invitations to other guests.**

It is always desirable that the Mayor should not overstay his/her welcome at any function and it is very often preferable that the Mayor should leave in advance of the last guests. On the other hand, the Mayor should not leave a dinner before the toast to the guests has been proposed and responded to. During the busy periods of the year of office, it is not unusual for the Mayor to be asked to attend two or three functions on the same day or same evening, which may overlap. There is no reason whatsoever why arrangements cannot be made so that the Mayor can spend an agreed amount of time at each function. As a general guide, the Mayor should give precedence to attending a function in the Borough.

If the Mayor is required to make a speech of any kind this will be indicated on the form of questionnaire. However, the Mayor is sometimes called upon to give impromptu speeches at functions without warning and this point should be borne in mind by the Mayor. In recent years it has become the custom for Mayors to be responsible for the drafting of their own speeches although the Mayor's Secretary is happy to offer advice on this matter.

THERE WILL BE OCCASIONS DURING THE YEAR WHEN ORGANISATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS APPROACH THE MAYOR DIRECT REQUESTING MAYORAL SUPPORT OR THE MAYOR'S PRESENCE AT SOME FUNCTION. SUCH APPROACHES SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED AND THE PERSON INVOLVED SHOULD BE REQUESTED TO CONTACT THE MAYOR'S SECRETARY AT THE BOROUGH COUNCIL (TELEPHONE NUMBER 742222).

14. ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS

The National Code of Conduct which applies to all councillors (including a councillor in a civic role) makes the following points about the receipt of gifts:

“You should treat with extreme caution any offer of gift, favour or hospitality that is made to you personally (as opposed to a gift to the Borough). The person or organisation making the offer may be doing, or seeking to do, business with the Council, or may be applying to the Council for planning permission or some other kind of decision.

There are no hard or fast rules about the acceptance or refusal of hospitality or tokens of goodwill ...”

As a general rule, all gifts to the Borough should be displayed in the Mayor’s Parlour.

Although the Mayor is personally responsible for all decisions connected with acceptance of gifts during official engagements, the Mayor’s Secretary will be pleased to offer advice should the need arise. The Mayor is recommended to keep a personal record of gifts received during the mayoral year that can be handed to the Mayor’s Secretary at the end of the Mayoral year.

15. CLOTHES

The matter is one to be decided by the Mayor depending on the functions to be attended. It is considered that evening dress will be necessary for both the Mayor and Mayoress/Consort. The Mayor’s Secretary will be able to give advice as to the appropriate clothing to be worn.

16. MAYOR’S PARLOUR

The Mayor’s Parlour (GF07) is available for the personal use of the Mayor. Mayors generally use it for small meetings or to host receptions. On occasion the Mayor may wish to hold larger receptions, when arrangements will be made for the Garden/Astley rooms to be available. Secure storage is available for spirits etc.

The practice is developing for civic heads of most authorities in Staffordshire to invite other civic heads to an informal reception in their Parlour or room. The Mayor is advised that it would be appropriate to arrange a similar reception in the Newcastle Parlour for civic guests – afternoon tea or evening buffet, the full cost of which is met by the Mayor from his/her allowance.

17. HOSPITALITY

It is found that the Mayor quite frequently wishes to extend hospitality to small numbers of people, e.g. for assistance given in organising a function, or to acknowledge receipt of large donations, or to foreign visitors, and any such hospitality must be paid for from the Mayor’s allowance.

A limited supply of civic gifts is available for presentation in appropriate cases. The Mayor’s Secretary is responsible for the allocation of civic gifts and is available to advise on the appropriateness of presenting gifts to visitors to the Mayor’s Parlour and at other civic occasions.

During the course of a year, there are invariably a few occasions when it is important that hospitality should be provided on a larger scale and is more by way of civic recognition by the Borough as a whole, e.g. receptions for delegates attending a conference at Keele University. It should be noted that any proposal to extend hospitality on such occasions requires the approval of the Chief Executive. A separate account is available to meet the expense of this hospitality although invitations to such occasions are required to be in the name of 'The Mayor and the Council'. Requests for hospitality of this nature often originate from other than the Mayor, but there is liaison with the Mayor to check his/her availability for the engagement etc.

18. PRESIDENCIES AND HONORARY MEMBERSHIPS

It is usual for the Mayor to be invited to accept presidencies or vice-presidencies of local organisations as well as honorary memberships of others.

The Mayor should not, as such, during his/her term of office, accept the vice-presidency or vice-chairmanship of any local organisation unless the organisation has some extra-Borough basis, or the president or chairman is some royal personage, e.g. the Lord Lieutenant of the County or some other prominent person. For example, it would not be reasonable for a Mayor to refuse to accept the vice-presidency of an organisation embracing North Staffordshire but, on the other hand, by virtue of her precedence, the Mayor ought not to accept the vice-presidency of a local organisation covering Newcastle only.

In the ordinary course of events it is not expected that the Mayor takes any active part in the running of the organisations, although it is always hoped that, where duties permit, the Mayor should attend some of the more important functions or meetings of these organisations.

19. REMEMBRANCE DAY

The observance of Remembrance Sunday includes a parade from Castle House to St. Giles Parish Church where a service is held prior to the Act of Remembrance taking place at the War Memorial in Red Lion Square. The practice is for the Mayor to take a salute at a 'March Past' following this service. An acknowledgement is made by the Mayor raising his/her hat as each section passes or as any colours pass. It is incorrect for the Mayor to salute.

20. CIVIC BALL

It is customary for the Mayor to host a civic ball in the spring. Points to note in connection with this occasion are:

- a) The need to make a booking as early as possible – Friday nights are considered to be the most suitable (usually in March)

- b) It is necessary to limit the expense which has to be borne out of the income on these occasions, otherwise this can have an adverse effect on the price to be charged for tickets.

Any complimentary tickets required by the Mayor are to be paid for out of the Mayor's allowance.

- c) In addition, the cost of engaging a suitable band for the Ball can cost from £800 upwards and is paid for by the Mayor from the Mayor's allowance.
- d) The practice has been to use the Ball to raise money for the Mayor's Charity Fund and to this end a raffle and/or tombola stall are organised. Local traders and businesses are asked to provide prizes for these events. Very little profit, if any, is made on the Ball itself and the majority of money for charity comes from the raffle and/or tombola.

It must be pointed out that the cost of holding a Civic Ball cannot be charged to the Council Tax Fund and any loss that may be incurred will have to be borne by the Mayor from the Mayor's Allowance.

21. THE MAYOR'S CHARITY FUND

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) in liaison with the Mayor's Secretary looks after the accounting side of this Fund. The practice is that any money raised by the Mayor for charitable purposes is paid into this Fund. In recent years it has been used for any large contributions to charitable causes, and at the end of the Mayoral year the Mayor distributes whatever money there may be in the Fund (less £500) to charities of his/her own choice, although it is suggested that these should be local in nature in order to be consistent with statements which are frequently made about the purpose for which the money is being raised. The sum of £500 is retained in the Mayor's Charity Fund so that an incoming Mayor has money available for any deserving case or cause that may arise shortly after taking up office.

The Mayor may, if he/she so wishes decide to raise money for some particular purpose and devote the whole of his/her efforts in that direction.

During recent years it has been the practice to hold a few functions to raise money for the Charity Fund. The functions vary but they do require assistance from a variety of sources, for which much depends upon the Mayor's personal contacts. Other than to provide publicity, the Council's staff and resources **should not** be called upon in connection with the organisation of the Mayor's Charity Fund events.

All cheques must be made payable to Newcastle Borough Council and will be coded to the Mayor's Charity Fund when paid in by the Mayor's Secretary.

22. SIGNING OF DOCUMENTS

During the course of his/her year in office, the Mayor may be required to sign official Council documents and, in particular, to attest the seal of official documents.

23. PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The Mayor, as Returning Officer, normally performs certain specified duties in connection with Parliamentary elections, namely:

- a) Deciding on the validity of nominations.
- b) Acceptance of the writ.
- c) Visiting various polling stations on Election Day.
- d) Attendance at the count and announcing the result.

For practical purposes, the Chief Executive is appointed Acting Returning Officer and makes all the necessary arrangements for the elections.

24. ATTENDANCE AT FUNERALS

The following suggestions are made as a basis for the guidance of the Mayor in deciding what action should be taken upon the death of a prominent local person.

- a) Ex-Mayors – the Chief Executive and the Mayor to attend the funeral and a wreath to be sent.
- b) Ex-Mayoresses – no action to be taken unless the death occurs within a very short time of the end of her year of office. The reason for not taking any action with regard to former Mayoresses is that they are only connected with civic affairs for a period of twelve months and after a few years it often becomes difficult to keep trace of them.
- c) Ex-Councillors with several years service – it is suggested that in the case of a person having six years service or more on the Council, such service having ended not more than six years prior to death, the Mayor and the Chief Executive should attend the funeral.
- d) Ex-Councillors with less than six years service – it is suggested that no action should be taken here unless death takes place within say two years of the end of the person's Council service.
- e) Councillors – the Mayor and the Chief Executive, Members of the Council and Officers should be invited to attend the funeral and a wreath should be sent.

- f) Prominent local people who have been connected with public life – cases of this kind should be treated on their individual merits and a decision taken by the Mayor in consultation with the Chief Executive.

In all of the above cases the Mayor's Secretary will approach the family of the deceased to ascertain that it is acceptable for the Mayor to attend in his/her official capacity wearing chains of office.

Letters of condolence should be sent by or on behalf of the Mayor to the next of kin in all of the above cases and such other cases as may be considered necessary in the light of prevailing circumstances.

25. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR

The Council shall appoint a member of the Council to be Deputy Mayor of the Council who shall, unless he/she resigns or becomes disqualified, hold office for a period of one year until immediately after the election of the Mayor at the next annual meeting of the Council. The Deputy Mayor only deputises for the Mayor at the Mayor's request where, in the opinion of the Mayor and/or the Mayor's Secretary, it is desirable for either the Borough or the Mayor to be represented at some function which the Mayor is unable to attend. For the more formal and important civic events, the Mayoral car will be available for use by the Deputy Mayor if not already in use by the Mayor. In all other cases the Deputy Mayor will attend engagements making use of his/her own car or, if this is not possible, by taxi. An allowance is paid to the Deputy Mayor to meet the expenses of the office.

26. ORDER OF PROCESSION FOR CIVIC PARADES

The order of procession as approved by the Council is attached at Appendix A.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

**Band
Military
Police**

Other Uniformed Detachments

High Constable

Mayor's Sergeant

Mace Bearers

MAYOR (1) (3) (4)

**Chief Executive
Chief Executive's Wife**

**Deputy Mayor
Deputy Mayoress**

**Chaplain
Mayoress**

**Ex Mayors (2)
Members of Parliament
Members of the Council
Honorary Freemen
County Councillors**

**Town Mayors and Chairs of Parish Councils
Magistrates
Principal Officers of the Council
Representatives of the University of Keele
Representatives of Organisations etc in the Borough
Burgesses
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Borough
Fire Brigade**

- (1) *Flanked by Police*
- (2) *Including ex Mayors of former Borough and ex Chairs of former Newcastle R.D.C. and Kidsgrove U.D.C.*
- (3) *In the event of the Lord Lieutenant of the County attending he would accompany the Mayor.*
- (4) *If the High Sheriff is attending he would be after the Mayor.*