



CORFE MULLEN TOWN COUNCIL

Civic Protocol

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Local Government Act 1972 s.245(6) gives parish councils the power by resolution to allow themselves the title of Town Council and the Chair of a Town Council is entitled to the style of 'Town Mayor', also known as the 'First Citizen' of Corfe Mullen.
- 1.2. Holding the position of Town Mayor (the 'Mayor') is a great privilege and very rewarding. The Mayor receives many invitations to civic, community and business events and occasions during the civic year.
- 1.3. This Civic Protocol (Protocol) is designed to assist the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to understand their roles and responsibilities and provide some useful guidance, which may be of assistance when undertaking civic duties on behalf of Corfe Mullen Town Council (the 'Council').
- 1.4. In general, the Mayor should be prepared to take the lead in all matters of concern in the life of the town, e.g. supporting local organisations and to lead all civic events organised by the Council.

2. Roles

- 2.1. There is no formal job description for the Mayor and each holder will approach the task differently according to personality, interests and time available.

3. Mayor

- 3.1. The primary legal function of the Mayor is to act as Chair of the Council and preside over meetings of the Council; if they are present at Full Council meetings, they must preside. If the Mayor is not present and the Deputy Mayor is present, the Deputy Mayor must preside.
- 3.2. As the person presiding at Council meetings, they have a responsibility for chairing Council meetings, ensuring sound legal decisions are made and second or casting vote in the event of an equality of votes. Where a casting vote is necessary, it is generally regarded as necessary to preserve the status quo.
- 3.3. They will take a prominent and leading role in the civic life of the town. This generally includes representing the Council, attending various civic functions and acting as a host at Civic gatherings.
- 3.4. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected by Members of the Council at the Annual Town Council meeting held in May each year. The Mayor remains in office until immediately after the new Mayor is elected at the next Annual Town Council meeting. In an election year, the outgoing Mayor has a statutory duty to preside (until the new Mayor is elected) at the first meeting following the election, even if they are no longer a Councillor.

4. Choosing to be the Mayor

- 4.1. If a member is considering standing as Mayor, they should consider the following factors during the term of office:
 - Do they have adequate experience to chair a meeting of the Council competently, ensuring a fair debate and that clear, legal decisions are made.
 - The impact on their family and friends.

- How will they balance the demands of attending events if they work, including attending some events during the working day.
- The expectations of the Office of Mayor can be very traditional. The challenge is to bring their own personality and flair to the proceedings while appropriately representing the Council and town.
- They should ensure that they are in a position to accept as many engagements as possible, expecting the Deputy Mayor to be involved only in the event of unforeseen illness, annual holiday or double booking.

5. Deputy Mayor

- 5.1. The primary role of the Deputy Mayor is to discharge all the functions of the Mayor if, for any reason, the Mayor is unable to act or the office of the Mayor is vacant. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is entitled to the Mayor's right of precedence, but they do not wear the Mayor's badge of office or adopt the title of Mayor.
- 5.2. Official invitations to represent the Council will be sent to the Council office. They will invariably be for the Mayor to attend, but the Mayor may ask the Deputy Mayor to attend if they are not available. The Deputy Mayor may accompany the Mayor to events as the Mayor's Consort, but care should be taken to ensure that the Mayor as a 'First Citizen' is afforded clear and full precedence.
- 5.3. The Deputy Mayor chairs meetings of the Council in the Mayor's absence. The Deputy Mayor has full legal status as a Vice-Chair and should be given precedence immediately after the Mayor.

6. Partners

- 6.1. The Mayor is referred to as the Mayor, whatever their gender. The Council refer to the Mayor's partner as Consort.
- 6.2. The Consort has no official standing, although the supporting role is fully appreciated. There will be occasions when the host of an event feels it appropriate to invite the Mayor alone without a partner or the Mayor and the Clerk. The Mayor should respect the host's wishes and remember that it is the Mayor, and the Mayor alone, who represents the Council.
- 6.3. Provision is made for spouses or Consorts to be seated in reserved seats in the Church or at other events before the civic procession arrives.
- 6.4. When the official Consort is not available to accompany the Mayor to an engagement, the Mayor may ask another person to accompany them, i.e. a member of the Mayor's family, the Deputy Mayor, another Councillor, a Council Officer or a personal friend.
- 6.5. In the interests of security and the dignity of the office, a Consort appointed by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor should be over the age of entitlement to vote in Parliamentary Elections. No person below this age may wear the Consort's badge.

7. Past Mayors

- 7.1. Past Mayors have no formal role.

8. The Mayor's Chaplain

- 8.1. The Mayor may choose to select a Chaplain, which is an honorary title, for an individual who may provide spiritual guidance or inspiration to the Mayor during their tenure. A Chaplain

may be a representative from a specific faith, inter-faith or a pastoral leader or celebrant of no faith, in keeping with the Council's inclusive culture.

9. Council meetings

- 9.1. Anyone considering the post of Mayor should have experience chairing committee meetings before they are required to chair a Council meeting. The principles are similar to chairing a committee meeting but with an added level of formality and challenge.
- 9.2. At meetings, the Mayor (or Committee Chair) sits at the head of the table, with the Clerk or Deputy Clerk sitting to their immediate right to provide advice.
- 9.3. The Council expects the Mayor to:
 - Have a good general knowledge of the Standing Orders and have a copy available at every meeting.
 - Avoid bias and be firm in ruling on points that arise during the meeting.
 - Ensure the quality and clarity of resolutions. It is helpful for the Mayor to repeat or summarise the resolution before requesting a motion to be seconded.
 - Where possible, meet with the Clerk before each meeting, if required, to ensure a clear understanding of the business to be transacted.

10. Attendance at functions

- 10.1. There are no rigid rules about which invitations should be accepted and which should be refused; this is for the Mayor to decide. Some caution should be exercised, considering they represent the Council and are not attending as individuals. Attendance should not bring the Council into disrepute or show commercial or political bias. While it is not possible to attend every event, it is important to attend as many events as possible, especially those of neighbouring towns or events organised by Dorset Council as the Unitary Authority.
- 10.2. Where there are clashes, acceptance would normally be on a 'first come, first served' basis, with preference given to events within the Council. However, should the Mayor have accepted an engagement outside of the town, it would not normally be acceptable to cancel in favour of another engagement within the town. The Deputy Mayor should attend in their place.
- 10.3. If the Mayor judges it appropriate to attend but cannot accept an invitation, it would be normal practice for the Mayor to ask whether the Deputy Mayor is able to attend, if available.
- 10.4. At functions hosted by the Mayor, the Mayor should not leave an event earlier than is socially acceptable to avoid offending guests.
- 10.5. In cancelling attendance at a function due to ill health or unforeseen circumstances, giving as much notice as possible is important in order for the Council office to make arrangements for a replacement, normally the Deputy Mayor, to attend and inform the function organiser accordingly.

11. Facilities and support for the Mayor

- 11.1. The office administrators are assigned to provide administrative support to enable the Mayor or Deputy Mayor to perform their official duties, including receiving and forwarding invitations and supporting the organisation of civic events.
- 11.2. Meeting facilities at Corfe Mullen Village Hall are available for the Mayor and other

Councillors to use for official Council business, subject to bookings and other functions. The office administrators will make arrangements in advance on the Mayor's and/or Councillors behalf.

12. Precedence at Civic Occasions

- 12.1. Precedence and protocol for visits and events is often set by custom and practice, with the exception of royal visits. The Lord Lieutenant and Chair of Dorset Council take precedence over the Mayor at civic events; however in most cases the Lord Lieutenant and the Chair of Dorset Council will usually surrender their precedence if they are present at events organised by the Town Council.
- 12.2. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is entitled to the Mayor's right of precedence, but they do not wear the Mayor's badge of office. Spouses of members of the Council and others, with the exception of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Consorts, should not be included in a civic procession, but arrangements should be made for them to be seated in reserved seats in the Church before the civic procession arrives.

13. Order of Precedence

(Persons to be omitted depending on the nature of the event but order maintained)

- Members of the Royal Family.
- Lord Lieutenant and Consort.
- High Sheriff and Consort.
- Mayor and Consort.
- Dorset Council Chair and Consort¹
- Military Representatives. (Remembrance Sunday only)
- Deputy Mayor and Consort.
- Member of Parliament for Dorset.
- Town Councillors.
- Dorset Ward Councillors.
- Visiting dignitaries.
- Police or Fire Officers.
- Local community organisations. (Remembrance Sunday only)

14. Lord Lieutenant

- 14.1. When the Lord Lieutenant is visiting, officially representing the Monarch, they have precedence over everyone present, including the Mayor. In procession, if the Lord Lieutenant is present, they must be accompanied by the Mayor and at a civic service, they would normally sit with the Mayoral Party.
- 14.2. If the Lord Lieutenant requests a Deputy Lieutenant to attend the function in their place, they should be accorded the precedence due to the Lord Lieutenant themselves.
- 14.3. On other occasions, the Deputy Lieutenants have no status as such, but they may be included in the Mayoral Party.

15. High Ranking Visitors

- 1.1. Where a distinguished visitor, e.g., a high-ranking Officer of the Armed Forces is attending

¹ The Chair of Dorset Council will have precedence over the Mayor at events not organised or hosted by the Town Council.

a civic ceremony or service, and the Council considers them worthy of the honour, they may be invited to walk in procession behind the Mayor.

16. Members of Parliament

- 16.1. A Member of Parliament is usually placed between the Mayoral Party and the Councillors unless they are Minister of the Crown, in which case they should be included in the Mayoral Party.

17. Representatives of Local Organisations

- 17.1. At the Remembrance Sunday civic service, representatives of local organisations may be included in the procession. If not, they will be asked to attend the Church as congregation members with reserved seats.

18. Civic Regalia

- 18.1. The mayoral regalia comprises of a badge of office and ribbon, with their Consort wearing a more modest badge of office and ribbon. The Deputy Mayor and their Consort wear a badge. The Mayor would normally wear the regalia at functions to which they are invited, which take place within the parish boundaries.
- 18.2. Where functions occur outside parish boundaries, it is customary to ask permission from the Mayor, if there is one before regalia is worn. Any invites sent by the Council Office should specify whether Chains of Office should be worn.
- 18.3. Civic regalia are to be worn only when on official Council business; the Council does not permit using the regalia for personal purposes.
- 18.4. The badge of office must be safely stored in the supplied case in a secure location. Badge of office should not be left unattended in a public space and stored safely out of sight, when not worn.
- 18.5. Care must be taken on the death of the Sovereign to ensure the badge of office is worn appropriately. At the Mayor's discretion, it is acceptable to either wear the badge on a black ribbon necklet.

19. Past Mayor's Badges

- 1.1. When they leave office, Past Mayors are presented with a badge in recognition of their service to the town at the Annual Town Council Meeting. They may also wear their Past Mayor's Badge on civic occasions.

20. Dress Code

- 20.1. There is no formal dress code for the Mayor, but the Mayor is expected to dress appropriately for the occasion. In general, the Mayor or Deputy Mayor and their Consort(s) should wear formal attire when attending church services.

21. Attending Civic Events

- 21.1. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and their Consorts along with all Councillors are requested to attend several civic occasions during the year, including the Celebration of Service and Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service.

22. Remembrance

- 22.1. Arranging Remembrance events and/or parades is a civic duty and is the responsibility of the Council. The Royal British Legion (RBL) plays a supporting role and attends remembrance events. Remembrance is a civic event hosted by the Mayor in their role as the town's 'first citizen'.
- 22.2. The Order of Precedence will be followed at the town's remembrance parade. All Councillors will be invited to participate in the parade.
- 22.3. The Council hosts the annual Remembrance Sunday Parade:
- Organising appropriate road closures
 - Hosting a meeting with interested parties to arrange the proceedings, including St Nicholas Church and the RBL.
 - The Mayors Chaplain traditionally leads the service.
 - Advertises the event, with invitations being sent in the name of the Mayor.

23. Annual Celebration of Service

- 23.1. Traditionally, the annual celebration of service is usually held in the Spring at St Nicholas Church. The Mayor usually meets with their Chaplain to agree on the format, theme and content of the service. The Mayor may choose an alternative venue or not hold a service at all, but should take advice from the Clerk before making a decision.
- 23.2. Councillors are requested to attend regardless of personal, religious or political beliefs.
- 23.3. It is customary to invite representatives from local organisations, dignitaries and residents.
- 23.4. Funding for the service is provided from the Chair's Allowance.
- 23.5. Money received from any collection will be given to the Mayor's chosen charity.
- 23.6. Refreshments to be provided for guests after the service.

24. Attendance at Funerals

- 24.1. The Council may wish to be represented at the funeral of a prominent person; however, in all circumstances, the wishes of the deceased's family should take precedence.
- 24.2. The following guidance is given and may be used where this is consistent with the wishes of the family:
- 24.3. Former Mayors of the Town - The Mayor or Deputy Mayor may attend the funeral, with a wreath sent on behalf of the Council. A Minute's silence may be held at the beginning of an appropriate meeting of the Council at the Mayor's discretion.
- 24.4. Serving Councillors - Depending on the scale of the funeral, the Mayor, Councillors, Clerk and Officers of the Council may attend as a sign of respect, and a wreath may be sent on behalf of the Council.
- 24.5. Former Councillors and prominent local people connected with public life - The Mayor should decide in consultation with the Clerk.
- 24.6. A letter of condolence should be sent on behalf of the Mayor to the next of kin in all the above

cases and other cases that may be considered necessary in the light of prevailing circumstances.

24.7. If the Mayor is invited to a funeral, they should attend purely as a mourner without wearing a badge of office unless the family expresses a wish to the contrary.

25. Review

25.1. This Civic Protocol was presented to the Full Council, for approval and adoption on 25 February 2025, minute no. TC 24/346.

25.2. Future reviews will be carried out bi-annually or when any changes are made to related legislation, whichever is sooner.

26. References

- 26.1. National Association of Civic Officers
- 26.2. Publication - Civic Ceremonial 5th Edition, Paul Millward
- 26.3. Local Government Act 1972
- 26.4. National Association of Local Councils (NALC)