

# **Sleaford Town Council**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **Chapter 33**

#### **Mayor/Chairman's Handbook and Civic Protocol**



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## **Section 1: Introduction**

Congratulations on being elected Mayor and Chairman of Sleaford Town Council. You are certainly looking at a busy year ahead and will be expected to represent the Council across the town and district. Your calendar will be filled with civic engagements and Council meetings and you will meet many people and build strong relationships which will benefit the Council as a whole.

This handbook has been produced as a guide for you, explaining civic life and the various engagements which are likely to be attended. It will also assist you in understanding your new role and responsibilities.

For the full details, please see the Town Council's Constitution and Standing Orders.

We want your year of office to be enjoyable and the staff will do everything possible to support you.

## **Section 2: Becoming the Mayor/Chairman**

Councillors considering the prospect of becoming Mayor/Chairman should contemplate the following issues which they will likely encounter before or during their year in office:

- a) The effect and consequences of becoming Mayor/Chairman on their family and friends;
- b) The effect and consequences of their career, their job or any fixed commitments;
- c) The effect on a political career, given that from a legal standpoint, party politics can play no part in council activities at parish and town council levels;
- d) The effect on personal and religious beliefs;
- e) The self-confidence required to effect high profile ceremonial activities on behalf of the Town and the Town Council;
- f) The effect on non-council interests, activities and pastimes;
- g) The effect on the Mayor's/Chairman's spouse or partner;
- h) The effect on a Mayor's/Chairman's relationship with other Councillors and Officers;
- i) The effect on the Mayor's/Chairman's relationship with constituents;
- j) The effect on the prospective Mayor's/Chairman's general health and well-being;
- k) The time commitment in undertaking the role of Mayor/Chairman (e.g. number of events that are attended). Also, the time needed to work with the Town Clerk to draw up the agenda for each Full Council meeting.

### **Section 3:**

#### **The Election of the Mayor/Chairman**

The election of the Mayor/Chairman is the first item of business at the Annual Meeting (AGM), with the election being decided by a majority of members present. The Mayor/Chairman-elect must be a member of the Council and make a declaration of Acceptance of Office within two months of the day of the election, which must be delivered to the Council's Proper Officer.

### **Section 4:**

#### **Definition and Distinction of the Mayor and Chairman**

Sleaford Town Council's Chairman is also the Council's Mayor. The two roles are as follows in section 5.

### **Section 5:**

#### **Role and Function of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor**

The Mayor or Deputy Mayor will:

- Will carry out a wide range of civic and ceremonial duties.
- Promote public involvement in Sleaford's activities.
- Attend functions and engagements within Sleaford, and on occasions outside the town, as a ceremonial representative of the Council.
- Undertake official openings or presentations on behalf of the Council.
- Organising events to raise funds for the Mayor's chosen charities.
- Represent the Council during royal, celebrity, twinning or VIP visits to the town.
- Represent the Town Council during events, where applicable.
- Attend civic events at NKDC and Lincolnshire County Council.
- Other events as required by the Council.

#### **Role and Function of the Chairman or Vice Chairman**

- Act as the Chairman of the Council and the Council's principal spokesman.
- Offer considered direction and judgement to the Council.
- Preside over meetings of the Town Council and ensure that meetings follow the procedures set out in Standing Orders.
- Has the casting vote in the event of a tie.

Like the role of Mayor, being the Chairman of the Council carries a responsibility of devoting time to the role. Throughout the year, there are twelve Full Council meetings, an Annual Town Meeting, an Annual Meeting (AGM), plus any extraordinary meetings that may occur.

It is advisable that you fully acquaint yourself with the Council's Constitution and Standing Orders so that you are aware of the full responsibilities of being Mayor/Chairman.

The Mayor/Chairman is not permitted to legally make a decision on behalf of the Council and has no more powers than any other Councillor.

Regular meetings will be held between the Mayor/Chairman, the Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman, the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk. The meetings will include briefings, any updates and discussion of the Full Council agendas.

For all functions of the Chairman, please refer to the Constitution and Standing Orders.

Not all eventualities will be covered by this booklet, but remember that assistance is always available from the Town Clerk.

## **Section 6:**

### **Precedence and Protocol**

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.

## **Section 7:**

### **Support Staff**

Detailed operational policy support and advice on a day to day basis is provided by:

- The Town Clerk
- Administration Officer (Mayoral only)

### **Town Clerk**

- The Town Clerk's prime responsibility is the management and administration of the Town Council and the execution of the Town Council's determinations. This includes management of the civic budget and providing direction and guidance on matters of civic procedure and protocol and ensuring the safety of the Mayor/Chairman and the civic insignia.

### **Administration Officer**

- The Administration Officer is responsible for providing practical administration support, diary management, assisting the Mayor in arranging the Civic Service and any Mayoral events and providing the administration support for this and the preparation of mayoral correspondence.
- All incoming invitations should be received by the Administration Officer for entering into the civic diary (which is partly to ensure that the civic insignia is covered by insurance when the Mayor/Chairman is attending a venue or event). Invitations will then be forward to the Mayor for consideration. If the Mayor is unable to attend, then the Administration Officer will forward any invitations for consideration to the Deputy Mayor for their consideration.
- In respect of civic invitations, whenever a firm booking for civic engagements is made, written confirmation is sent to the organisers by the Administration Officer.
- Support the Mayor/Deputy Mayor (if they so require) with additional information such as details of any awards to be presented, whether a speech is required, dress code, parking arrangements etc.

**Section 8:**  
**General Requirements**

The Mayor must endeavour to carry out a full year's programme of engagements. Mayoral engagements are very wide ranging and where possible, all invitations will be accepted, provided the engagements are appropriate and that the Mayor, or Deputy Mayor, is available.

The Mayor should accept as many engagements in person as possible. The Deputy Mayor is normally called upon in the event of the Mayor's unavailability or in unforeseen circumstances.

Upon the commencement of taking Office, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should advise the Administration Officer of their availability (particularly if they are in employment) and of any meetings, events or holidays already scheduled in their personal diaries.

The Mayor/Chairman and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman will regularly report to Full Council on functions that they have attended in their civic role.

**Section 9:**  
**Receipt of Hospitality Gifts**

In the course of the duty of being Mayor/Chairman, gifts may sometimes be offered to them. 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 Mayor/Chairman or Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman, to register any gifts or hospitality over a specified limit that are received in connection with their official duties as a Member and the source of the gift or hospitality. You must register the gift or hospitality and its source within 28 days of receiving it. 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.

**Section 10:**  
**Political Neutrality**

Every Mayor/Chairman must be a Councillor and, by definition, a diplomat with clear responsibilities to the electors in their Ward.

The Mayor/Chairman should go out of their way to display neutrality in political matters during their year in office. It is inappropriate for the Mayor/Chairman to be associated with any politically contentious or divisive issues.

**Section 11:**  
**Civic Insignia and Regalia**

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

An important point to remember is that the dignity of the Office must be maintained, and the use of civic chains should not be a matter of routine. When wearing the mayoral chain, the Mayor/Chairman or Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman should be appropriately dressed as befits the Office and never wear inappropriate, casual clothing such as t-shirts, jeans or trainers.

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.

When not in use, the chains should be kept in their official box. Although insurance cover is in place when the chains are in the possession of the Mayor/Chairman or Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman, it must be accepted that the Chains are irreplaceable. The chain should never be left unattended (such as in a vehicle) or placed at risk at any time.

The Mayor/Chairman or Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman should take personal responsibility to ensure adequate security measures are always in place whilst in possession of the chain. The chain should remain in its designated box at the Town Hall other than when being worn on official or ceremonial duties.

The above equally applies to the Mayoress or Mayor's Consort and the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress or Deputy Consort's Chains of Office, which should only be worn when required on official occasions.

Where both the Mayor/Chairman and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman are present at an event, it is only the Mayor/Chairman that would wear the chains of office, not the Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman. The exception to this is where both the Mayor/Chairman and the Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman attend the Mayor's Civic Service and Reception and the Sleaford Town Awards (both Town Council events).

**Section 12:**  
**Mayor's/Chairman's Civic Service**

Each year, the Mayor/Chairman holds a Civic Service. This often takes the form of a Civic Service reflecting religious and civic importance. However, the specifics of the event are entirely the choice of the Mayor/Chairman but must be kept within the agreed budget, must be held in the parish of Sleaford and must be a suitable civic occasion inviting local and regional civic dignitaries. The Mayor/Chairman must discuss and agree the proposal with the Town Clerk. A Civic Reception could also be organised to co-ordinate with the Civic Service.

### **Section 13: Mayor's/Chairman's Charities**

The Mayor's/Chairman's charity raises funds for local charities and good causes in the Sleaford area.

The Mayor/Chairman may decide on either one main charity to support or a number of local charities or good causes. It is common to announce the chosen charity at the Annual Town Council Meeting when the Mayor/Chairman is elected. The chosen charity or charities will then be notified and all funds raised at the events held by the Mayor/Chairman will be donated to the chosen charity or charities, usually at a presentation to be held at the end of the Mayor's/Chairman's year in office. Funds raised for the Mayor's/Chairman's charities cannot be used for any other purpose other than as a donation to the charity identified when the funds were raised, apart from for to cover all reasonable costs to raise the funds.

During the Mayor's/Chairman's term of office, they can hold fund-raising events for their charities eg. a dinner, dance, quiz etc. Events/functions must be cost neutral to the Council and be organised by the Mayor/Chairman with support from the Administration Officer. Other events may be organised by local organisations, businesses, clubs or institutions, with proceeds given to the Mayor's charity.

Many businesses etc will support the Mayor's/Chairman's charities and the Mayor/Chairman is permitted to visit local shops, pubs and businesses around the town to ask for prizes for a tombola or raffle. This gives a more personal approach and businesses are consequently more likely to support the charities.

The Mayor/Chairman will announce the total amount raised for their charity/charities at the end of the term of office. The Annual Town Council Meeting might be considered an appropriate time to present cheques to the charities nominated. The local press are invited to attend, however if absent, photographs will be taken and press releases sent to local newspapers for their use.

### **Section 14: Civic Expenses**

In your civic role, expenses will be incurred for the maintaining the dignity of the Office of Mayor, these can be reclaimed and must be approved by the Town Clerk.

The Mayor may purchase and reclaim from expenses only the following items;

- a) one suit of clothes and accessories (e.g. shoes, hat etc) for the Mayor.
- b) one set of clothes and accessories for the Mayor's Consort.
- c) travel expenses to official events booked through the Town Hall e.g. train fare, car mileage, taxi fare, small car hire etc.
- d) overnight stays at reasonably priced accommodation for self and Consort when necessary for attending an official event e.g. B&B.
- e) Small sums for donations, raffle tickets etc at official events attended.

If the Deputy Mayor is attending an official event in place of the Mayor, then they may claim for themselves and their consort items c) to e) only.'

There are also other budget lines which contain provision for certain Civic events including the Civic Service and one-off Town Council events supported or hosted by the Mayor/Chairman. Once the budget level has been reached, subsequent events must be self-funding.

Any underspend goes back into Council funds.

### **Section 15: Christmas E-Cards**

The Mayor/Chairman is expected to send Christmas e-cards, which will be designed and sent out by the Administration Officer, to other Civic Heads, Past Mayors, Town Councillors and local organisations. Payment of postage costs for cards sent by the Mayor/Chairman for family and friends is the Mayor's personal responsibility and will not be met by the Council.

### **Section 16: The Civic Year - Events**

Below are details of typical events which are organised during the Mayor's/Chairman's year in Office.

These dates are discussed during a meeting with the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Administration Officer at the beginning of each new year to suit the Mayor's diary.

Civic dignitaries from the Council's designated invitation list. together with leaders of local community groups and organisations, Town Councillors, friends, staff and family are invited to any civic events.

**Annual Town Meeting** - 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 Sleaford, the meeting is organised by the Mayor/Chairman and Town Clerk and is chaired by the Mayor/Chairman. The meeting can adopt any format showing the work of the previous year and the aims and objectives going forward. The meeting must be held between 1st March and 1st June each year.

**Annual Meeting (AGM)** – This meeting is where the outgoing Mayor asks for nominations for a new Mayor/Chairman and Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman. The Council then vote for the nominees put forward. The new Mayor/Chairman will then take over the meeting and will present the outgoing Mayor with a Past Mayor's Badge.

**Remembrance Sunday** - Remembrance Sunday is held on the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of Armistice Day, which is on 11<sup>th</sup> November 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 Sleaford Town Council in memory of those men and women who gave their lives for their country.

**Sleaford and District Twinning Association** – the Mayor/Chairman is the Town Council's representative on the Sleaford and District Twinning Association. The Mayor/Chairman will attend all the meetings of the group and the Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman will attend in the absence of the Mayor/Chairman.

**Miscellaneous Events** - various miscellaneous events are attended by the Mayor, examples of which are included in the following: Town Twinning events and visits, opening of and attendance at fayres, garden parties, shows, unveilings, openings etc. Events, exhibitions and presentations at local schools.

The Christmas lights "Switch On," STC organised events, LCC and NKDC Civic Services, Civic events and charity fund-raising events.

### **Section 17: Mayor's End of Year**

At the Annual Meeting (AGM) which notes the end of the Mayor's Term of Office, the outgoing Mayor makes a short speech and needs to consider a number of matters:

- Thanks to the Council Staff.
- Thanks to the Mayor's personal supporters – spouse/partner, family, friends etc.
- Thanks to the Deputy Mayor for support and assistance.
- Thanks to the charity supporters, Councillors who have helped and anyone else who has influenced or assisted in any way throughout the year.
- Talking to the successor, when announced, giving advice and information. The new Mayor will also present the previous Mayor with a Past Mayor's badge.