



NEATH TOWN MAYOR 'HANDBOOK'

The Office of the Town Mayor

The word "Mayor" derives from the Latin word "Magnus" meaning great. The office of Mayor together with the Domesday Book and the Feudal system were brought to this country by the Normans.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper establishes a set of principles and expectations concerning how the role of the Town Mayor should be conducted to ensure clarity and consistency for the benefit of the Town and the Town Council as well as the Office holder.
- 1.2. The Town Council regards the mayoralty as a key element in cementing the Town's civic and community identity and an influential resource to be devoted to furthering the Town's interests over a wide range of issues and concerns. It is a ceremonial role.

2. ROLE OF THE MAYOR

This is defined as:

- (i) Chairman of the Town Council
- (ii) Representative of Town on civic matters
- (iii) Spokesman for the Council and the Town on civic matters
- (iv) Representative of defined Town organisations: County and Town Liaison for example
- (v) Constable of Neath Castle (ceremonial)

In carrying out these roles, the Mayor must be mindful of the dignity of the Office and ensure due protocol and precedence is applied.

3. THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING LEGAL PROCEDURES

The Mayor shall be elected at the Annual Council Meeting in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Section 4 (1)

- 3.1 The Mayor will assume the role of Chairman of the Town Council

- 3.2 Additional useful information

- The procedure for conducting the Annual Meeting is set out in the Standing Orders.
- Potential Mayors are advised to prepare a short acceptance speech and will be required to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- This could be used where appropriate, on the Town Council website.

4. LEGAL ROLE AND DUTY OF THE TOWN MAYOR

- 4.1 The main duty of the Mayor is to preside at meetings of the Town Council.

When chairing meetings the chairman should avoid getting involved in debate on highly contentious issues. An impartial chairman should use their office where appropriate and when necessary to clarify the position of *both* side in the debate or make compromise or consensus proposals. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the chairman to temporarily vacate the chair if they wish to participate in the debate.

- 4.2 Meetings of the Town Council should take precedence over outside invitations received in order to ensure that meetings remain legally quorate.

- 4.3 The Town Mayor must not:
- Make decisions or act alone without prior resolution from the Council
 - Speak out on private or confidential issues
 - Conduct a press conference or press release without consulting the Town Council or Clerk.
- 4.4 The Town Mayor, as are all Councillors, is bound by the Code of Conduct Act and copies of this are available from the office of the Town Clerk.

5. THE COUNCIL'S EXPECTATION ON THE TOWN MAYOR

The following expectations are applied to the manner in which the Town Mayor conducts him/her role

- The Mayor needs to exhibit a keen and genuine interest in people they meet, and act with dignity but sociability.
- The Mayor must show enthusiasm and genuine commitment to the role at all times.
- The Mayor is non-party political
- The Mayor should speak up on the Town's interests, reflecting the policy of the Town Council at all times rather than individual views on any issues.
- The Mayor should seek to use the opportunities and influence of the office proactively to promote the improvement of the community and community spirit.

6. CIVIC FUNCTIONS

6.1 **Ceremonial.** These are obligatory on the Mayor. They cover Remembrance Sunday, Remembrance Day at Melyncryddan, Drumhead Services at Neath Cenotaph and Neath Town Council Civic Service and additional Events such as Mayoral Dinner etc.

6.2 **Chairing local meetings.** The Mayor should Chair the Annual Meeting and any other public meetings held by the Council. The Mayor should also be available to Chair the Full Council Meetings.

6.3. **Supporting Town Activities.** This covers the bulk of engagements and includes visits to schools, local businesses, charity organisations etc. The Mayor should accept as many engagements of this type as possible.

6.4. **Christmas Cards.** Christmas cards will be sent each year from the Town Mayor to other councils and local organisation. This will be organised by the Town Clerk.

6.6. **Deputy Mayor.** The Deputy Mayor, where appropriate, will be asked to attend those duties that the Mayor is unable to fulfil.

The Mayor's diary is kept by the Mayor's Secretary, in conjunction with the Town Clerk, who will jointly advise and brief the Mayor on engagements. All invitations for the Mayor should be sent to the Town Clerk, where they will be processed, checked against the Mayor's availability and discussed with the Mayor. Once agreed, the engagement will be entered into the official office diary and the Town Mayor's personal diary, and the Mayor's Secretary will write on behalf of the Mayor to either accept or decline an invitation.

The Mayor should not be tempted to accept invitations made in an informal manner, say by word of mouth, when attending another function. Invitations need to be checked with the diary, apart from which it is not appropriate to accept invitations spontaneously, without due consideration of all the circumstances and in consultation with the Town Clerk. The most appropriate response in such circumstances is to say "I'd be delighted to attend, if I'm free – please write to the Town Clerk with all the details and we'll get back to you as soon as possible".

People may well want to be photographed with the Mayor at an event, and this is perfectly reasonable and understandable. Any photographs taken should not be used for commercial purposes to promote a particular service or product, and the Mayor should also be careful not to say or do anything which might give the impression that they are endorsing that service or product. ***The Mayor should always assume that they will be required to speak at any function, even if this has not been previously stated by the organisers.***

7. ROLE OF CONSORT / MAYORESS

When the Town Mayor has a Consort, they must be both sympathetic and supportive to the expectations of the Town Mayor as the role is important and complementary to the success of the Mayor's role. The Consort should be given equivalent respect and dignity as that given to the Mayor by the Town Council whenever he/she accompanies the Mayor on civic engagements.

The Consort takes the Honorary Position of Chair in the Neath Town Mayoress Appeal Committee.

Where there is no Consort, or the Consort is unavailable, the Mayor may ask a Councillor to act as their escort.

8. ROLE OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

The Deputy Town Mayor should support the Town Mayor by attending functions at the Town Mayor's request. At all times when the Deputy Town Mayor is deputising for the Town Mayor they assume the full roles and responsibilities as laid out for the Town Mayor. The Council's expectation of the Deputy Town Mayor will be identical in all regards to those required by the Town Mayor.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

- 9.1. The Mayor's Secretary is responsible for all administration regarding the Mayor's correspondence.
- 9.2. The Mayor's Secretary will write all letters from the Town Mayor regarding the acceptance or otherwise of invitations. The Town Clerk and Events Administrator will deal with the issuing of invitations to civic events.
- 9.3. The Town Mayor may dictate any other letters where necessary.
- 9.4. Sending of flowers would be arranged by the Town Clerk.

10. MAYOR'S EXPENSES

- 10.1. The Town Mayor, as any other Councillor, is entitled to claim travel expenses for any event attended. Travelling expenses cannot be claimed for journeys inside the town boundaries and therefore precludes any meeting of the Town Council. Car parking charges will also be refunded.
- 10.2. The Town Mayor will be given an annual expense allowance. These expenses are to help fulfil the Town Mayor's Civic duties. These expenses will cover following:
 - Collections
 - Purchase of raffle tickets
 - Donations ie charity or bucket collections
 - Taxi fees (not arranged directly by Neath Town Council)
 - Clothing to prepare the Mayor (and Mayoress/Consort) for their Mayoral duties

Church Services require donations via a collection during the Service. When appropriate, the Mayor's Secretary will, in advance, give the Mayor a donation envelope in preparation. If a taxi is required the Mayor's Secretary will arrange this and an invoice by the agreed taxi firm will be sent to the office. If this is not planned in advance, a receipt from the taxi firm should be obtained. If this is not possible, a note of the expense from the Mayor should be given to the Clerk to sign off as an agreed claim for expenses. This will be linked to the Event which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress.

Receipts for all expenditure, including those receipts mentioned above must be provided to ensure payment can be released and a clear audit trail of expenditure provided to External Auditors, should this be requested.

HM Revenue & Customs could regard the Mayoral Allowance as a benefit in kind and therefore there is a need to be able to prove that the Mayoral Allowance has been properly spent for the purpose of which it has been given.

It is therefore recommended that the Mayor should keep full details of all the expenditure incurred against the Mayoral Allowance in the event that HM Revenue & Customs wish to inspect their documentation.

Therefore, a log of all expenses incurred during the Mayoral Year should be listed and recorded in the Mayoral Personal Expenses book/diary. A book/diary shall be given to each Mayor however it is their own personal preference how these expenses are recorded. This will ensure that all allowances which are claimed are correctly recorded and there is a clear audit trail of the expenditure of the annual expense allowance.

All Events which are hosted by the Mayor ie Civic Service, Ceremonial Dinners or presentation evenings, shall be set against the Mayoral Budget agreed at each Annual Meeting of Council. A proportion of the full Mayoral Budget will include the Mayoral Expenses example: Mayoral Budget of £2,000 will include a Mayoral Expenses budget of £500. Therefore, the budgets will be Mayoral Budget of £1,500 and Mayoral Expenses of £500 totalling £2,000.

As recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales which identify that through the increased formal responsibilities of Town and Community Councils, the Councillors are no longer volunteers. Therefore, the recommendations state that the Mayor, plus other Members which have significant roles on the Town Council, must be paid an allowance provided for the year. This is taxable at source.

11. TAXATION AND INSURANCE

- 11.1. Any duties payable to the Inland Revenue will depend on the individual status of the Mayor. Therefore the responsibility rests with the individuals concerned to check any potential tax liability.
- 11.2. The Town Council will not be held responsible for any liabilities arising from payment of expenses.

12. HOSPITALITY AND ‘GIFTS’

- 12.1. The Town Mayor is required to declare to the Town Clerk any Civic Hospitality or ‘gifts’ they have been given above the value of £25.

13. CHAIN OF OFFICE

- 13.1. The Mayor’s Chain shall only be worn on official occasions and may only be worn by the Mayor.
- 13.4. When attending events, it is preferable for the Chains of Office to be worn in preparation for the arrival at an event, especially if members of the public will be in attendance. However reasonable care must be taken and it is not advisable for the Town Mayor to wear the Chains of Office, whilst walking alone especially at night.
- 13.2. The Mayor’s Chains are insured for use at events and travelling on an ‘all risk policy’ but it is advised that for periods when the Mayor are away from home that the Chains of Office are returned to the Town Clerk for safe keeping.
- 13.3. When the Mayor is travelling in their vehicle, the Chains of Office must not be worn and be stored out of sight.

14. MAYORAL PHOTOGRAPH

- 14.1. An official photograph of the Town Mayor, with chain, at the start of their term at the Annual Meeting of Council. This will capture their commitment to honour the role of the Mayor for the forthcoming year of office. This picture will be then placed on display alongside previous Town Mayors. Should the Mayor to be able to hold office for the full Mayoral Year, Council deem that service of more than 6 months be noted in Council records.

15. VACANCY IN OFFICE OF MAYOR (or Deputy Mayor)

- 15.1. If a vacancy occurs for the office of Mayor as a consequence of death, disqualification or resignation the Deputy Mayor, if available and willing to take office shall become Mayor and shall serve until the next Annual Council Meeting; otherwise the Town Clerk shall place an item on the agenda for the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council for the appointment of a Mayor to serve until the next Annual Council Meeting.
- 15.2. If a vacancy occurs for the office of Deputy Mayor as a consequence of death, becoming mayor,

disqualification or resignation, the Town Clerk shall place an item on the agenda of the next Ordinary Meeting of the Council for the appointment of a Deputy Mayor to serve until the next Annual Council Meeting.

16. GENERAL

The Town Mayor has a vital role to play during their term of office as 'First Citizen' of Neath. Equally, the Town Clerk also has an important role, as head of the Council's paid service. It is the Town Clerk, not the Town Mayor, who is the person in day to day control of the Town Council's business, including the supervision and allocation of work to the Council's staff. Each must respect the other's vital, but distinct roles, and work together in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

The Town Mayor's year in office should be memorable! There will be many challenges and the year should reflect that of personal achievement and well as that of Neath Town Council

The Town Clerk is available at all times to assist the Town Mayor with the year in office.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CIVIC EVENTS

Male Mayors are to be addressed as “Mister Mayor.”

Female Mayors are to be addressed as “Madam Mayor.”

The wife or long-term partner of a male Mayor may be called The Mayoress. Any other female is called an Escort. The husband or long-term partner of a female Mayor is called a Consort. These roles are not recognised by statute and, as such, they do not hold office. The Mayoress is entitled to wear the Mayoress’s Chain when performing duties but this is not strictly a badge of office.

The Mayoress/Escort/Consort should only wear the Chain/Badge in the presence of the Mayor.

The Town Mayor can choose to have different Escorts if this is more convenient. These Escorts may wear the Mayor’s Escort Badge.

If the Town Mayor or Deputy Mayor cannot attend a function which is considered to be important, the Council can appoint a substitute, but only if the inviting body has given prior permission.

Precedence

- The Lord Lieutenant.
- The High Sheriff.
- The Town Mayor has precedence over any other citizen of the town unless they are one of the above.
- The Town Mayor takes precedence over the Mayor of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council when the occasion is purely a town matter.
- In an assemblage of Mayors, they may rank mutually after the host Mayor, either in alphabetical order or in an order determined by the population of their respective authorities. Usually in an assemblage of Mayors and Chairmen, Mayors of Unitary Authorities have precedence over the Mayors and Chairmen of Town or Community Councils.
- The Town Clerk is not entitled to any precedence as such, but as the temporal advisor of the Mayor he/she should accompany the Mayor at his/her right hand on all ceremonial occasions, the usually accepted rule being that whenever the Mayor robes, he/she should be accompanied by the Town Clerk, also robed.
- The Deputy Town Mayor is elected by the Council to act in the Mayor’s absence and is entitled of right, in such circumstance to take the Chair at Council Meetings. They also assume the Mayor’s order of precedence when deputising.

Wearing the Chain of Office and Robes

The Robes of Office are worn at:

- The Mayor Making Ceremony. The Chain of Office should be worn throughout the whole evening.
- The Civic Service.
- The Remembrance Day Parade.
- During Christmas Light Switch On Celebrations

White gloves must be worn with the robes.

The Deputy Town Mayor is not entitled to wear the Mayoral Robes or the Chain of Office. They are entitled to wear the Deputy Mayor’s Chains when deputising in the absence of the Town Mayor and at Mayor Making but cannot wear the Chains when the Mayor is present except with the express permission of the Mayor.

The Chain of Office may be worn at any official function within the Town Council boundaries.

If the Town Mayor is invited to a function in a neighboring town or community council and the hosts have indicated they would like the Chain to be worn, the Mayor, through the Mayor's Secretary, must ask permission to do so of the Mayor/Chairman of the town or community council they are visiting.

When visiting other towns, the Chain should only be worn if the host authority invites you to wear Chains of Office; this is usually other towns in the County. If there is no invitation to wear the Chain, the situation should be clarified by the Mayor's Secretary beforehand. Invitations usually indicate what is to be worn.

When not being worn, the Chain of Office, together with the Deputy Mayor's Chain of Office, must be kept in the safe in the Administration Offices.

Dress

Male Mayors should wear lounge suits for formal occasions unless evening dress is specified. During Mayor's Civic Days, smart casual sports jackets and ties can be worn. The main criteria here is comfort as these occasions involve a variety of activities. A male Mayor should always wear a Town Council tie except when the occasion is completely informal.

Female Mayors should wear smart clothing for all formal occasions. She can wear smart casual clothes for Civic Days.

Jeans and trainers are not appropriate dress for Mayors whilst on duty.

A pair of comfortable shoes is essential for all daytime occasions as even on formal Civic Functions, there is usually a great deal of walking and standing around involved.

The Chain is held in place by pins with attached ribbons as indicated by the Town Clerk.

It is inappropriate for Mayors and Mayoress's to wear neck jewellery when wearing official insignia.

Other Protocol matters

All invitations must go through the Mayor's Secretary.

The Town Mayor should not accept invitations to open commercial premises in the town or informal casual events such as personal coffee mornings. If in doubt check with the Town Clerk.

Gifts up to the value of £50 can be accepted by a Town Mayor under the Model Code of Conduct.

Care must be taken to decide what is a gift to the town and what is a personal gift.

If any gifts or hospitality that are worth more than £50 are offered to the Town Mayor, they should register it on their Declaration of Interests held by the Town Clerk.

The Town Mayor should not solicit invitations.

Invitations should be answered expeditiously. If the Town Mayor cannot attend the event, the invitation should be offered to the Deputy Town Mayor, if the host is in agreement, through the Mayor's Secretary.

The Town Mayor is expected to be impartial and neutral when conducting Council Meetings. It is important that the Mayoralty is non-political. Care should be taken when using the casting vote and should serve the best interests of the town. If in doubt, the casting vote should be used to maintain the status quo.

Mayor Making (Annual Meeting of Council)

Order of proceedings

The Councillors enter the Council Chamber.

The current Town Mayor takes the Chair.

The Annual Council Meeting is then officially opened and the formal agenda is followed.

A procedure for the meeting will be prepared, separately to the agenda, for the Outgoing and incoming Mayors to follow.

After the election of the new Town Mayor, the retiring Town Mayor and the newly elected Town Mayor retire together with the Town Clerk and officials into the Town Clerk's Office.

All Councillors and guests stand at this point.

The Robes and Chain of Office are then handed over.

The Town Crier/Clerk stands at the door and announces the new Town Mayor using the words "Please be upstanding for the Mayor of Neath Town Council, Cllr....."

The new Town Mayor enters the chamber followed by the Town Clerk and Officials and takes the Chair.

The retiring Town Mayor then takes a seat at the Council table.

The new Town Mayor will make the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office. (Read and sign the version of the oath).

A vote of thanks is given to the retiring Town Mayor by the Councillor who proposed the outgoing Mayor the year before or a suitable substitute.

The Appointment of Mayoress/Escort. (The retiring Mayoress/Escort presents the Chain/Badge to the incoming Mayoress/Escort.)

The Town Mayor will address the Council and Public. (The speech can include any projects that the Mayor wishes to pursue.)

Proposal that the Deputy Mayor Elect be elected as Deputy Mayor for the Civic Year.

Proposal to be seconded.

Election of the Deputy Mayor and presentation by the Mayor of the Deputy Mayor's Chain of Office.

The Deputy Mayor may declare an Escort: Chain to be presented.

The Deputy Mayor is invited to sit on the top table.

Past Mayor's Badge to be presented to the outgoing Mayor.

Floral tributes and gifts may be presented.

The Annual Council Meeting will commence via the Agenda.

The Annual Council Meeting is then formally adjourned by resolution noting the date and time of reconvening.

The Town Mayor invites the guests to the Reception.

Official Photographs to be taken at this point.

Civic Service

After the Mayor Making Ceremony, the Mayor should liaise with the Mayor's Secretary to organise the Civic Service, which is normally held in June or as and when instructed by the Mayor.

The Mayor's Secretary will have booked the church earlier in the year at a time to suit both Council and Church.

The Town Mayor liaises with the Chaplain about the format of the service and any cost implications. Decide on a guest list for the service with the Mayor's Secretary.

The Mayor's Secretary invites all organisations by letter/email. The Mayor's Secretary should regularly update details.

The Mayor's Secretary invites:

- The Sergeant at Mace.
- The Town Crier.
- The Youth Organisation Representatives

Invitations are sent to:

- The Member of Parliament.
- The High Sheriff of West Glamorgan
- Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan
- Mayors of other towns and Escorts.
- The Chairmen of adjacent Town & Community Councils.
- Community Groups

On the Day

The Mayor's Secretary may organise refreshments, for guests and Councillors, before **or** after the service, but this is not obligatory. All expenses to be paid from the Mayor's allowance. The Mayor must make arrangements for this.

The Church Wardens should be provided with a seating plan and a set of cards to be placed on pews showing where people sit, well before the service.

All Town Councillors, partners and guests should meet in the Town Hall. Councillors should arrive at least half an hour before to robe up in the Council Chamber. The Mayor robes up with the aid of the Sergeant at Mace in the Town Hall.

The Mayor's Escort and Deputy Mayor's Escort should lead the Town Councilor's partners down to the church and be seated on the right-hand side of the aisle facing the altar.

The Town Crier should stand at the entrance to the Church and greet the guests.

Remembrance Day

This is organised by the Royal British Legion who decide the order of the procession as set out in the Royal British Legion Handbook, and the order of laying wreaths.

The Town Clerk/Mayors Secretary will order 2 wreaths for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor before the day. They

will be carried by the Town Clerk on behalf of the Mayor, in the procession to the church and then up to the War Memorial Gates.

The Mayor and Councillors arrive at least half an hour before the procession starts to robe up. Mayors may wear their own full-size decorations on their left breast. Miniature medals should not be worn.

The Procession usually will be arranged by the Town Clerk to St Davids Church where the Wardens will assist.

After the church service, the parade reforms outside St Davids Church for the walk to the Memorial Gates. Wreaths are laid in accordance with the Royal British Legion Protocol.

The Town Mayor is called upon by the Parade Marshall to step up and lay the wreath on the Memorial. The Mayor, if male, removes his hat and bows to the wreath. The Mayor, if female, just bows and steps back to their place.

The RBL will order the wreath laying at this memorial.