



Brixham Town Council

Role of Town Councillors, Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons

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TOWN COUNCILLORS

Main Duties

1. To represent the needs, priorities and aspirations of your electors and the people of Brixham by making yourself known to people within your Ward, being accessible and liaising or consulting extensively with local communities, organisations and businesses;
2. To promote the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the people of Brixham, to comply with all relevant Codes of Conduct and to act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity in public life, seeking to serve the community without personal gain.

Key Duties within the Community

1. to effectively and regularly communicate with people within your Ward;
2. to represent the people within your Ward and to represent their views in the Council's decision making processes;
3. to assist your electors to raise issues of importance or personal concern including, if necessary, to investigate and pursue such issues on their behalf;
4. to remain accountable to your electors between elections and to balance different interests identified within the Ward and represent the Ward as a whole;
5. to work in partnership with communities and other agencies, both within your Ward and throughout the Town;
6. to campaign actively for measures that will help to build stronger and safer communities;
7. to liaise with other levels of government, agencies or other bodies which influence the well-being of people within your Ward and throughout Brixham.

Key Duties to the Town Council

1. to assist the Council to achieve a full understanding within the local community of its role and functions and to promote it as being listening, accessible and responsive;
2. to develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's services, management arrangements, powers/duties and constraints, and to develop good working relationships with fellow Members and relevant Officers;
3. to attend meetings of the Council and of its various committees, Task and Finish Groups and panels as necessary and to undertake the reading and preparation necessary for you to take a full part in meetings;
4. to participate constructively in the good governance of the Town;
5. to participate in setting priorities and a budget;
6. to help to ensure that the Council provides best value services;
7. to scrutinise performance against targets in all areas of the Council's direct and indirect activity;
8. to participate in the formulation and review of Council policies and decisions about the role of the Council at meetings of the Council and of its various committees, Task and Finish Groups and panels;
9. to liaise with other levels of government, agencies and other bodies which influence the wellbeing of Brixham;
10. as required from time to time to chair meetings of the Council's various committees, Task and Finish and panels;
11. to undertake other official duties or act as a representative of the Council and to play a full part in maintaining the Council's civic and ceremonial traditions;
12. to be familiar with the Council's policies, plans and priorities.

CHAIRPERSONS AND VICE CHAIRPERSONS

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide an explanation as to the role of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson so that all Councillors can make an informed decision as to whether or not such a position is something they would wish to consider. The guide also provides guidance to an incoming Chairperson / Vice Chairperson with advice and support as they plan and work through their year which will commence at the Town Council's Annual Meeting in one year and conclude the following May at the next Annual Meeting when they hand over to their successor. Whilst this guide is not comprehensive on all matters its intention is to provide a useful source of general information and briefly describes a number of aspects including the Civic Ambassador's role in most of the major annual functions, notes on etiquette and explanation of Town Council staffing support.

A Chairperson:

- Holds a statutory post defined in law
- Is a member of the Council and is elected annually (in May)
- Has the authority at meetings and must be obeyed when issuing lawful direction or direction in line with Standing Orders.
- Has a casting vote if there is a tied vote.
- Is the interface between the public and Council
- The one to welcome speakers and make them 'feel at home'
- Summarises the debate and facilitates the making of clear resolutions, making sure the decision is clear for the Clerk to act upon
- Calls and Presides at the Annual Parish Meeting (usually held in March)
- Is the ex-officio member of the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee
- Act as a focal point in times of crisis, tragedy or triumph

The Chairperson should:

- Know that the agenda was put up in time and be familiar with business to be covered.
- Arrive in good time, adequately briefed and with all the necessary papers in correct order.
- Ensure the meeting is quorate.
- Start the meeting on time by declaring it open, and end it by clearly stating it closed and the time it ended.
- Know that he/she has no more statutory power than any other Councillor except that of the casting vote.
- Ensure that all points of view have a clear hearing.
- Keep the discussion to the point, and that it is relevant and ensure the Council deals with clear issues.
- Ensure the Council/committee acts only within its terms of reference and/or legal powers and functions.
- Ensure compliance with standing orders, financial regulations, Council policies, etc.
- Ensure that where and when appropriate and allowable the Council takes a vote to exclude the public and press from Council meetings.
- Understand the principles of debate and voting (see Standing Orders and Good Councillor Guide).
- Remain impartial and not 'guide' Councillors to his/her desired decision.
- Ideally not allow the meeting to continue for more than 2 hours. (see Standing Orders).
- Create an atmosphere which encourages participation
- Be in control of the meeting.

- Respect and understand the role of the Clerk and other Officers, and ensure that employment issues (e.g. performance, disciplinary matters) are only raised in Council meetings when appropriate and in line with Council policy and employment law.
- Co-operate with Officers and Councillors.

A Vice Chairperson

- Will also be known as the Civic Town Ambassador
- Is the public face of the Council and civic representative of the town of Brixham
- Is a member of the Council and is elected annually (in May) after the election of the Chairperson
- Is the ex-officio member of the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee
- Will carry out the functions of the Chairperson in his / her absence
- Is the Line Manager to the Town Clerk
- Attends all Civic functions of the Council and acts as the Town's Ambassador. Officers will manage a Civic calendar of events and actively promote the Ambassador role.

CIVIC TOWN AMBASSADOR

For those chosen or thinking of putting themselves forward, being Civic Town Ambassador is different from being a Councillor; it is a position with different rules, different working hours, different restraints and can be a physically and mentally tiring role. It is, however, a hugely enjoyable and rewarding role if entered into in the right spirit.

It is recommended that Councillors should consider the following factors before making a decision whether or not to put themselves forward for the role of Civic Town Ambassador:

- i) Effect on family and friends:
The Civic Town Ambassador will inevitably be "out of the house" more than an ordinary Councillor and often at unsocial hours. A Civic Town Ambassador's social life is disrupted and supplanted with a new social life not of their making and thus keeping up with his/her own interests and friends may prove difficult.
- ii) Effect on career/job:
Careful discussions will need to take place with the Civic Town Ambassador's employer to ensure a good balance is maintained. Some employers make provision for leave for employees fulfilling a public role.
- iii) Effect on political career:
The Civic Town Ambassador must remain neutral and step back from politics for the term of Office but that is not to say he/she does not have a vote in Council and they will continue to play a role in the decision making of the Council.
- iv) Effects on personal and religious beliefs:
As Civic Town Ambassador, a Councillor represents all sections of the Council, not merely those who support a particular political, social or religious view. It is the role of the Civic Town Ambassador to acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity in the area. A Civic Town Ambassador will be invited to institutions he/she is politically opposed to, and church services opposed to his/her own religious beliefs. It must be remembered that the Office of Civic Town Ambassador belongs to the public and not the individual that occupies it, or for that matter the Officers who advise it.
- v) Pomp and ceremony:
Some will be uncomfortable with the formality of the Office of Civic Town Ambassador. There are Chains of Office to wear and numerous protocols to follow. The public want such trappings of Office. Civic Town Ambassadors should operate

within such constraints but should not be afraid to add their own personality and flair to the proceedings.

vi) Effects on Non-Councillor Interests:

The Civic Town Ambassador, as he/she does in his/her capacity as Councillor, must act within the Code of Conduct and as such must be conscious of his/her private activities and any potential impact they might have on his/her public role.

vii) Civic Town Ambassador's Relationship with Other Councillors:

The Civic Town Ambassador is amongst, but separate from, other Councillors. He/she may spend less time on Committee work and there may be some loss of "political" contact. Councillors will undoubtedly seek the Civic Town Ambassador's help in promoting Council initiatives and as such he/she is likely to see a wider cross-section of Council work than before.

viii) Civic Town Ambassador's Relationship with Constituents:

The Civic Town Ambassador is still a Councillor and his/her constituents will still need help.

Role of Civic Town Ambassador

The Civic Town Ambassador, can use their position to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector and mould social cohesion. A Civic Town Ambassador may also have endless meetings and engagements with dignitaries and groups requiring late nights and early mornings as they will be in the public eye for their entire year of Office.

There are two main roles for the Civic Town Ambassador in today's local council and society:

- i) A symbol of authority – The Civic Town Ambassador can clearly be seen as a symbol of the Town and its Parish, with the insignia of the chains of Office.
- ii) Expression of social cohesion – the many, often social engagements that are undertaken by a Civic Town Ambassador are an expression of giving cohesion to the life of the Town. The Civic Town Ambassador can act as a link between the various organisations he/she visits and can feed back the views and concerns of people into the political fields

The following are examples of some of the ceremonial work:

- To be the representative for the Town Council, the community and local democracy.
- To attend, and where necessary, host the Council's civic events and other major Council sponsored events as appropriate and to welcome visitors to the Town on behalf of its members.
- To promote the Town at all opportunities.
- To attend and, where necessary, host receptions and other events associated with charitable and voluntary organisations operating within the Town Council's area; thereby assisting in promoting their good works and affording them due recognition for their valuable contributions to the wellbeing of the local community.

CIVIC PRECEDENT WITHIN THE COUNTY

It is often when a Councillor thinks about taking on the role of Civic Town Ambassador that they feel daunted by the ceremonial and etiquette elements of the role. It is hoped that information in this Handbook can help to settle such nerves and allow Councillors to instead think of the enjoyment and value that can be gleaned from the very special events and opportunities to which they would get invited in such an honoured role.

Lord Lieutenant

Section 1 of the Lieutenancy Act 1997 requires the Queen to appoint a Lord Lieutenant for each County in England and Wales. Lord Lieutenants are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and retire at aged 75. The Queen may appoint Deputy Lieutenants, the maximum number of which is determined by the population of the county area. Lord Lieutenants and their Deputies are required to have a place of residence in the County.

The fundamental principle concerning the Office of the Lord Lieutenant is that he is the Sovereign's representative in a county and consequently it is his duty to uphold the dignity of the Crown. The Office is non-political. Lord Lieutenants are unpaid, but receive minimal allowances for secretarial help, mileage allowance and a driver.

The Lord Lieutenant's main duties include:

- Overseeing any Royal visit
- Civic/social – encouraging voluntary organisations
- Forces – inspecting Troops, presenting Colours
- Presentation of medals on behalf of the Queen
- Keep Of The Rolls – Lord Lieutenant is the Chief Magistrate in the County

If the Lord Lieutenant of the County is present in his official capacity representing the Queen he will take precedence over all others present. At purely Town Council civic functions the Lord Lieutenant normally surrenders his precedence to the Civic Mayor.

High Sheriff

The High Sheriff (an annual appointment) is the oldest secular Office in the United Kingdom and dates back to Saxon times. The Sheriff is a direct appointment of the Sovereign by warrant and takes Office by making a Declaration of Loyalty. It is an independent, non-political Office. The High Sheriff receives no remuneration and no part of the expenses of his year of Office falls on the public purse.

The main duties of the High Sheriff include:

- Attendance in Court with High Court Judges
- Execution of High Court Writs
- Responsibility for the proclamation of the accession of a new Sovereign

In modern precedence as defined by the Royal Warrant of 1904 the High Sheriff is by right second only in his County to the Lord Lieutenant, but gives precedence to the Civic Mayor when he/she is undertaking business in his/her own area.

Nominations to the Office are dealt with through the presiding Judge of the Circuit and Privy Council. Three nominations for each County are considered at a meeting in November, with the Sovereign selecting their preferred candidate.

Civic Mayor of Torbay Council

The Civic Mayor of Torbay Council takes precedence in the Torbay Council area over everyone, including Civic Town Ambassador, subject only to the Royal prerogative. However, at purely Town Council civic functions the Civic Mayor surrenders his precedence to the Civic Town Ambassador.

The Civic Ambassador of Brixham

The area over which the Civic Town Ambassador of Brixham presides is restricted to the area defined as the Parish of Brixham. The Civic Town Ambassador enjoys precedence in his/her own area and not that of his/her neighbours. Therefore, the Civic Town Ambassador should not accept an invitation to attend, in an official capacity, a function in another area without the express consent of the Civic Mayor/Chair of that area. If consent to attend in another area is forthcoming, the Civic Town Ambassador chains should not be worn unless approved by the Civic Mayor of the area to be visited.

The Civic Town Ambassador's Consort

They are usually the partner of the Civic Town Ambassador, although he or she can choose any person they wish to act in that capacity. There may be occasion where the Consort is not able to escort the Civic Town Ambassador to an engagement. The Civic Town Ambassador may ask another person to accompany him/her to the engagement. The role of the Consort is to support the Civic Town Ambassador during his/her year of Office.

Civic Town Ambassador Etiquette (including wearing of chains)

It is expected that where the Civic Town Ambassador attends a function and the Chains of Office shall be worn. Chains should be worn at all formal Civic Town Ambassador events but NOT when:

- The Civic Town Ambassador is attending private functions or in a private capacity
- The Civic Town Ambassador is attending a function outside of the Town Council's area, unless he/she has the consent of the Civic Mayor or Chairman of that local authority
- The Civic Town Ambassador is visiting the Palace of Westminster, where it is deemed to be a Palace of the Sovereign

The Chains of Office for the Civic Town Ambassador is covered by the Council's insurance policy. If it is necessary to take them home, they must be kept appropriately, using common sense. They must not be left unattended in cars or other vehicles.

Office Support Town Clerk

The Town Clerk, due to other Council duties, plays a minor role in the day to day support of the Civic Town Ambassador. However, it is expected that the Town Clerk will accompany the Civic Town Ambassador on high civic occasions within the Parish such as Remembrance Sunday.

Receptionist

The Council's Receptionist will deal with most correspondence addressed to the Civic Town Ambassador, which will be in the main invitations for the Civic Town Ambassador and Consort to attend various functions. The Civic Town Ambassador will inevitably receive some invitations etc direct, which should be passed to the Receptionist for attention. A specific calendar is accessible by the Civic Town Ambassador and the Receptionist. The Civic Town Ambassador is expected that if they are to be unavailable for a period of time to inform the Receptionist for courtesy. The Receptionist will collate invitations and communicate directly with the Civic Town Ambassador to determine which events they are and are not attending in order that appropriate replies can be sent and then prepare advisory information/guidance about the event being attended.

ACTIVITIES

The Town Council delivers the following community events at which attendance by the Civic Town Ambassador is expected:

Remembrance Service

The Civic Town Ambassador leads the Town's remembrance activities including processing with dignitaries and reading during the Church service at St. Mary's.

Remembrance Sunday Service

The Civic Town Ambassador leads the Town's remembrance activities including processing with dignitaries and reading during the service and laying a wreath at the Town's War Memorial.

Armistice Day

The Civic Town Ambassador attends a small service with dignitaries and laying a wreath at the Churston War Memorial, organised by the Royal British Legion.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Reporting to Council

The Civic Town Ambassador is asked to provide a report of their activities at each Town Council meeting. It is encouraged that such reports are written and given to the Town Clerk at least one week prior to the meeting in order to be included and issued with the agenda pack.

Communicating With The Public

The Town Council operates a website which has a page dedicated to the Civic Town Ambassador. If the Civic Town Ambassador wishes to use this they need to prepare their own content and forward to the Town Clerk. From this, information will be disseminated through the Council's social media accounts. The Brixham Signal is published four times per year with a copy delivered to each house in the Town and Civic Mayoral events will be promoted and reported in this. Posters for events are displayed in the Town Council Offices and noticeboards.

Relationship with the Press

The press may ask the Civic Town Ambassador to comment on issues. The Civic Town Ambassador, should only speak about matters directly relating to their activities or events which they are attending. All other media requests should be forward to the Town Clerk or Chairperson of the Council.

Public Meetings and Politics

Once appointed, the Civic Town Ambassador is apolitical and should not get involved in controversial organisations. The Civic Town Ambassador should not take part in a political conference, other than to officially open it, which is an acceptable Civic Town Ambassador engagement.

Being A Civic Town Ambassador During Purdah (The Run Up To Council Elections)

During the run up to elections, the period officially known as purdah, there are statutory guidelines the Town Council must follow regarding publicity. Guidance should be sought from the Town Clerk to ensure that the Civic Town Ambassador operates within the guidelines..

Gifts To The Civic Town Ambassador

Gifts may be given to the Civic Town Ambassador personally. If there is any doubt as to whether the gift is personal or for the town, then advice should be sought from the Town Clerk. Generally speaking determining whether a gift is for the town or for the Civic Town Ambassador is usually when anything of great value or meaning to the town would be kept on display in the Town Council Offices, and anything of smaller value / edible / perishable / personal, then the Civic Town Ambassador would keep it.

Civic Town Ambassador gifts that are not deemed personal will be subject to the following policy and submitted for acceptance at the end of each Civic Mayoral year:

- Gifts are accepted on the understanding that there is no guarantee of automatic, immediate display
- Gifts accepted for display must be relevant to the town and accompanied by supporting information
- The gift must be acknowledged and reference to the donor included in the display
- Details of gifts shall be added to the list of Civic Regalia within the Fixed Assets Schedule of the Council and kept in the Town Council offices.

For gifts which are deemed as personal the Civic Town Ambassador will need to follow the rules which apply to all Councillors in that they must declare gifts or hospitality received in their capacity as a Councillor. Please refer to the Council's Gifts and Hospitality Policy for further advice.