

Joining the chain gang: preparing for the role of civic mayor

Councillor workbook



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This councillor workbook includes references to materials published by the Local Government Group and Local Government Leadership, now both the Local Government Association (LGA).

Foreword

This workbook has been designed to help members prepare for the role of civic mayor (or the equivalent civic head of a council).

For convenience and simplification, the generic terms 'civic mayor' or 'mayor' have been used throughout the document. We realise that this term applies only to specific councils and that in other authorities in England the post may be appropriately titled lord mayor, chair or chairman of the council. Equally, we recognise that some members may choose to use other titles, including lady mayor or madam chairman.



“NACO welcomes this member workbook and encourages any potential mayor to use the booklet to plan, with officers, a useful, targeted and fulfilling year of office.”

Paul Millward, Chair, National Association of Civic Officers (NACO)

This document is not aimed at the growing number of directly-elected executive mayors who have taken office as a result of the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 (and the further changes contained within the Localism Act 2011), even though some of the material will be of relevance to them.

Executive mayors are different to civic mayors as they are a direct product of a political process, and therefore have an electorate to satisfy and a political agenda to deliver. Their role is more akin to that of a traditional 'leader of the council'.

The workbook will not provide you with detailed advice and guidance on the specific ceremonial duties and civic responsibilities that exist within your council. The reason for this should be clear once you begin to consider the bewildering (and sometimes unique) array of customs and practices that accompany the role of civic mayor in many council areas. In some, this heritage stretches back for centuries, with an accompanying backdrop of official insignia, customary social etiquette and long-standing municipal protocols.



“An excellent workbook that will help newly appointed mayors to think through what they want to achieve in their year of office.”

Councillor Robert Davis DL, Chair, London Mayors' Association

Instead it will cover a broad outline of the key duties and responsibilities you will be taking on and provide some clear guidance about the benefits and pitfalls of the role. Much of this is drawn from the experience of the many former civic mayors and serving civic managers who generously shared their knowledge and observations with us for this document (see 'Acknowledgements' in Appendix B). As such, the workbook should serve more as a series of signposts rather than a detailed road map.

In practical terms, the document will take around **three to four hours** to work through. You do not need to complete it all in one session and you may prefer to work through the material at your own pace. The key requirement is to think about the issues presented and how the material relates to your civic office, the people you serve and the council you represent.

In working through the material contained in this workbook you will encounter a number of features designed to help you think about the role of a civic mayor. These features are represented by the symbols shown below:



Guidance – this is used to indicate research, quotations, explanations and definitions that you may find helpful.



Challenges – these are questions or queries raised in the text which ask you to reflect on your role or approach – in essence, they are designed to be thought-provokers.



Case studies – these are 'pen pictures' of approaches used by other people or organisations.



Hints and tips – these represent a selection of good practices which you may find useful.



Useful links – these are signposts to sources of further information and support, outside of the workbook, which may help with principles, processes, methods and approaches. A full list of useful additional information and support is also set out in the appendices to the workbook.

The role of the civic mayor

Preparing for the role

History and heritage

The office of a civic mayor is an important element of a council's governance structure. The role is often demanding and frequently governed by complicated rules, regulations and official procedures. The public profile accorded to the office provides little room for error. And while the powers of the civic mayor may have diminished over the years, the role has retained its importance in the history and cultural heritage of our country.

The mayor is often seen as a symbol of an open society because the role is no longer restricted to an elite group within the population. The 'first citizen', as they are sometimes known, can come from any class, gender or ethnic background and has a key democratic role to play. After being chosen and appointed by fellow councillors, he or she must act as a politically impartial chairman of the council, making sure that proper conduct takes place in the council chamber during meetings.

The civic mayor also has a duty and privilege to support local initiatives aimed at providing benefit to the council area and its diverse communities. In this role, the mayor can speak and act in multiple capacities, as ambassador, facilitator, promoter and encourager. This may involve highlighting relevant causes and helping members of the local community to receive the recognition they deserve. However, it is probably the mayor's ceremonial role that most people are familiar with. Mayors

are frequently invited to attend events in the community, such as openings and fundraising events organised by voluntary and charitable organisations. Fundraising events may also be held for charities that are chosen by the new mayor at the start of the civic year. All in all, it is potentially a busy year for any mayoral candidate.



The history of civic mayors

In Britain, the civic office of mayor brings with it over 800 years of tradition and loyalty to the crown and a direct link to the monarch through parliament. The office of mayor was first introduced by the Normans in the eleventh century, and the word itself derives from the Latin 'magnus' meaning 'great'. The first English mayor was the lord mayor of the City of London who took office in 1189.

From 1835, the title of mayor was given to the head of each municipal council, or 'corporation', in England, with the postholder being seen as the 'first citizen' who spoke for the whole town or city and gave it an identity.

The role of a mayor is covered by Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1972. This states that all local authorities must appoint a chairman. The only authorities who can use the alternative term 'mayor' are those which have been granted a Royal Charter and given the status of borough or city. Also, parishes can, by resolution, designate themselves as town councils and elect a mayor.



Exercise 1 – the history and heritage of your mayoralty

Using your existing knowledge or any research you are able to carry out on the council's intranet (or other information sources available to members), write down what you know about the history and heritage of the mayoralty in your council area.

(a) When was the office of mayor first established and what were the historical events that led to its creation (for example, the granting of a Royal Charter)?

(b) What are the key symbols of the office which help to maintain the ceremonial heritage in the minds of the public (for example clothing and insignia)?

(c) Name some of the well-known people who have occupied the position of mayor and any significant achievements they are remembered for.

(d) What support is available within the council for the office of mayor and are there written guidelines or protocols that may explain the freedoms and limitations of the role?

Look again at what you have written. It may be that you have only limited knowledge in some of these areas. If so, you will probably need to do further preparation for your role as mayor.

Understanding the requirements

It is unlikely that you first stood in a local government election in order to become a civic mayor. However, as with all other aspects of your role as an elected community leader, the office is one which can bring enormous personal satisfaction and fulfilment while enabling you to serve the interests of your constituents.

There is no 'ideal candidate' for the office of mayor and each new incumbent will (and should) bring their own particular flair and personality to the position. That said, it is important to recognise that you will need to undertake considerable preparations before your civic year begins. It is also worth noting some of the key skills that can help to ensure that your period of civic office will be a great success for all concerned (see role profile). The completion of this workbook will enable you to identify what further steps you may need to take in preparing for the tasks ahead. It will help you brush up on your skills and knowledge, and stamp your personality on the role. These can also be recorded in the 'final thoughts' section at the end of this workbook.



Role profile – the key skills of a mayor

Leadership

- advanced ambassadorial skills so you are able to represent the council in a variety of settings
- mentoring to the deputy mayor
- ability to lead civic ceremonies, promote the civic role and encourage community participation
- ability to carry out the role with dignity and gravitas, affording the office of mayor respect.

Chairing

- advanced chairing skills, in order to manage the business of full council meetings.

Organisational skills

- ability to plan and prioritise meetings and events, and entrust engagements to the deputy mayor.

Team working and relationship building

- ability to build strong, effective relationships between the council, its partners and communities
- ability to act with political neutrality
- tact, diplomacy and the ability to mediate and broker agreement across political groups.

Communication

- advanced skills in working with the media and public relations specialists
- ability to communicate the council's messages and themes out into the community and to work towards achieving the council's social, economic and environmental aims
- advanced listening and public speaking skills and basic speech-writing skills.

Knowledge

- advanced knowledge of the civic role and responsibilities, and the council's code of conduct and constitutional arrangements
- advanced knowledge and understanding of the customs and beliefs of different cultural groups which make up the diverse community of the council area
- an understanding of the council's constitution, rules and procedures and how these should be interpreted in any given situation.

First steps

Some councils have a policy of appointing as civic mayor the previous year's deputy mayor. This can provide the new mayoral candidate with invaluable exposure to the ceremonial duties and responsibilities of the civic head. They can also build good working relationships with the managers and staff who support the mayoralty behind the scenes. Much of this will depend, of course, on the extent to which the serving mayor is prepared to delegate tasks and enable the deputy mayor to effectively 'work shadow' his or her peer.



"We only serve a year, we spend six months learning the job, we then spend six months possibly trying to innovate, and then we hand it on to another ingénue who doesn't know what he is doing either and he spends six months learning the job."

Former mayor

Given the significance of the role, it was somewhat surprising to find that over a quarter of the former mayors who contributed to the research for this workbook had undertaken no formal induction training prior to the start of their civic year. Most had relied on ad hoc briefings by past mayors, political colleagues, chief officers or mayoral support staff. Only in a few cases had former mayors attended specific training courses or seminars set up by their own authority or run in conjunction with other local councils.

If available, all of these methods can be essential first steps in familiarising you with the role and expectations of the office of mayor. On the training front, you should also be aware

that for those in the Greater London area, the London Mayors' Association provides briefing and training sessions for new mayors.

Your council is likely to have its own 'civic protocol' or 'civic handbook' document which will explain the key operational duties and responsibilities of the mayor. Alongside this, you should digest all relevant sections of your council's constitution and Standing Orders to fully appreciate the rules that will govern your year of tenure. This preparatory reading is essential. But remember, as well as providing you with copies of all the relevant documentation, your mayoral support staff and chief officers should be able to advise you on any points of legality, procedure or ceremonial etiquette that are unclear to you.



"Realise that to do the role properly and be 'the people's face of the council', it will run your life's timelines."

Brian Ayling, former Mayor, Dacorum Borough Council

In addition to this formal preparation, you should give appropriate time and thought to the likely impact of the role on you personally. Think about how it might affect your relationships with family and friends, the possible effect on your career and the long-term impact on your general health and well-being. The one certainty of your civic year is likely to be the overwhelming demands on your time. So be clear from the outset about what you might be giving up by taking on the role.



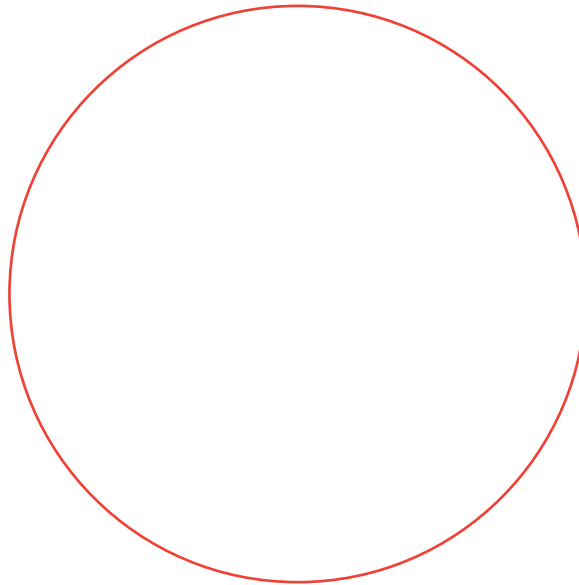
Preparing for the role: hints and tips from former mayors

Be committed	There can be a heavy time commitment. In effect you are giving up a year of your life to council duties. Belief and self-motivation are essential.
Get your family behind you	Recognise the likely impact on those close to you, especially your partner and/or any family member you have chosen as your mayoress/consort/escort. If appropriate, arrange for some extra domestic help.
Get advice	Talk to the out-going mayor and previous incumbents about anything and everything to do with the role. They will each have their own tips for survival.
Check and practice your skills	The role requires a different mix of skills from those of a general councillor, particularly in terms of self-presentation and public speaking. Recognise your shortcomings and get some practical training if you think you need it.
Talk to your officers	They are there to help you and can advise you on most aspects of the role. Invest some time early on in building good working relationships with the mayoral support staff in particular. They will be crucial to your success.
Read the handbook	Most councils have one. It will contain detailed guidance on issues such as the role, protocols, appropriate clothing, and giving and receiving gifts. This is essential preparation.
Check your wardrobe	Ensure that you have sufficient clothes of the right kind, including comfortable footwear, for all occasions. You will be invited to muddy building sites, VIP dinners, and everything in between. Recognise that you may need to budget for these yourself.
Attend events that the current mayor is attending	Watch closely. Think how you would handle the situation, and what changes you would make to be effective and create the right impression.
Stay healthy	Watch what you eat and drink. The hospitality at civic events and functions can have an adverse impact on your diet and health. Try to pace yourself and plan some time out for leisure and exercise.
Start distancing yourself from controversial matters	Once you are mayor you will need to be outside of party politics and non-partisan when chairing meetings. Don't take on the role if you are not prepared to be apolitical for a year.



Exercise 2 – planning your time

Think about how you spend your time in a typical month. How much is on family and domestic matters, and how much is on council business, leisure or other social activities? Using the pie chart below, divide it up to show the time you spend on each activity to build up a picture of how you are currently spending your waking hours.



Look again at how your time is currently spread. Now imagine that the bulk of your time is going to be taken up with your mayoral duties; most likely morning, afternoon and evening. What will you have to sacrifice? How can you build in time for other activities? Who can help you to keep the semblance of a balanced life? What steps can you plan now so you use your time more efficiently? Planning ahead now should help you to keep your head above water.

Planning and diary management

As an incoming civic mayor, you will have a brief period in which to prepare for the year ahead. Effective planning and diary management will help you to take up the role with confidence. Key to this period of initial planning will be the managers and staff designated to support you as mayor (for convenience we refer to this as the 'mayor's office', although the title of the team will vary). The mayor's office will be an invaluable source of guidance throughout the year, as well as administering to the detail of your civic activities. Early briefing meetings with these staff will therefore be essential (the role of the mayor's office is explored later in this workbook).

The chief executive and other relevant chief officers will also be available to give you some early advice, although the mayor's office should be consulted on any matters of guidance or concern in the first instance. Similarly, you may wish to consult with the leader of the council or other relevant executive members as appropriate. In this period of initial planning, you should resolve the following matters:



Preparation checklist

Diary dates

You should advise the mayor's office of any important dates of a personal nature on which you will not be available for civic duties. This is also a good time to alert the support staff to any pre-existing medical conditions or disabilities you may have that could affect your ability to carry out the role and any personal preferences you have for attending events and functions. For example, do you want to set out in advance how long your working day should be?

Mayor's theme

Most mayors choose a theme for their year of office, often one they have a personal association with. It should support the council's corporate objectives and have a community focus. It is helpful to discuss and agree it with the council leadership (the section 'Being first citizen' covers this issue in greater depth).

Mayor's charity

If you are planning to nominate a charity for your chosen year, it is useful to go public with this as soon as possible. Work may be needed to establish an independent charity committee of willing volunteers and advisors who can take on the required fundraising work.

Biographical notes

The hosts at events you will attend should be given these notes in advance so they know a bit about you. They are similarly useful for giving to the media when requested. The biography may highlight your chosen theme or charity. After your election, it is also likely that the mayor's office will arrange for a portrait photograph to be taken of you for publicity purposes.

Acceptance speech

This is part of the formality of becoming mayor. While the style and content is up to you, it is generally appropriate for the incoming mayor to thank the council for selecting them and to announce their chosen theme and/or charity.

Civic protocol

You should ensure that you are familiar with the protocols for accepting invitations and conducting yourself at engagements. This should include discussion about the range and style of clothing you will wear when performing your various duties. In many cases, your council will have its own specific guidance on these matters.

Honorary appointments

Along with appointing a deputy mayor, you may also be required to appoint people to a number of honorary positions, including a mayor's chaplain or cadet. In all cases, you should follow whatever formal arrangements have been established in your council for this purpose. Similarly, you will need to identify the person who will accompany you on ceremonial duties. If you are male, you may designate a wife, daughter or friend as your 'mayoress'. If you are female and married, you may designate your husband as the 'mayor's consort'. If you choose somebody other than your husband (eg your son) or are unmarried, your official companion will be named the 'mayor's escort'. These titles are honorary positions with no official recognition.

Being first citizen

The focus of the role

In addition to your role as chairman of the council, you will be expected as mayor to speak and act on behalf of the diverse communities represented in your council area. This may involve some or all of the following responsibilities:

- **Leading the community** in support of the council's values and vision. This may involve finding ways of improving the engagement with local people, encouraging citizenship, championing worthy causes and encouraging formal and informal partnerships to work towards the priorities and objectives of the council. This is all consistent with the move towards greater public involvement and local accountability enshrined within the Localism Act 2011.
- **Acting as first citizen** and ambassador of the council in promoting your council area, its aims and vision. One former mayor consulted in the research for this workbook described this task as 'an honour' and commented that it was 'the best product [they] ever had to sell.'
- **Presiding over civic functions** and hosting receptions for representatives of local businesses and voluntary and community groups.
- **Attending a range of functions** by outside organisations, locally, regionally and, occasionally, nationally and internationally. This may include royal events, remembrance services and awards ceremonies. As mayor, you must consider each invitation carefully and decide whether it is appropriate to attend. If you are unavailable, the deputy mayor may be delegated to attend.

- **Helping to raise funds** for specific charitable organisations identified at the start of the civic year. The main contribution you can often make as mayor is to raise the charity's profile rather than actually raising money. Outside organisations and individuals often organise fundraising activities in support of a mayor's charity appeal.
- **Observing civic protocols** when undertaking the civic and ceremonial role, eg the protocols around flag-raising or the wearing of chains of office. In some cases, you may have additional roles which come with the office, eg if you are also the admiral of a port.

In recent years there has been much debate about the extent to which a mayor should focus on a specific programme of activities and events linked to the council's strategic plans and objectives. Some have argued that such a focus can raise questions about the extent to which the mayor is acting in a truly apolitical way and instead believe that the predominant focus of mayoral activity should be on supporting and raising money for good causes.

In an era of tight fiscal control and limited financial resources, it is important to recognise that local people will expect to receive value for money from the office of mayor in the same way that they do from all other council functions. In such a climate, it will be increasingly difficult to justify a mayoral programme which has no specific aims or goals and which appears to exist purely to raise money for good causes.



The mayor's focus: supporting corporate objectives

The following is taken from Derby City Council's entry for the NACO Civic Team of the Year award 2008:

Derby City Council has worked hard to develop the role of its Mayor in supporting the council's corporate priorities. This has become a key principle in the work of the Mayor's Office Team, which invests time each year talking to each Mayor Designate, to explore which theme he or she wants to adopt, and to ensure that it can be matched to the council's corporate plan.

In this way, all of the engagements and initiatives that the Mayor embarks upon are guaranteed to be 'on theme' and supportive of the council's wider work.

In early 2007, the Mayor Designate, Councillor Pauline Latham OBE, told the Mayor's Office Team that her theme would be 'Go Green', to reflect her environmental concerns. This fitted neatly with a statement in the council's new corporate plan about Leading Derby towards a better environment with the objectives of reducing the level of carbon emissions, raising awareness of climate change and local environmental issues and care for Derby's heritage.

Initiatives introduced in line with this included:

- changing the civic car from a stretched limousine to a leased luxury saloon with a hybrid petrol/electric engine at no extra cost
- a commitment from the mayor to walk from The Council House to engagements within the inner ring-road of Derby
- a 'Derby De-Lights' campaign to encourage businesses and individuals to switch off all non-essential electrical appliances for a period of one hour on a chosen day. The resulting reduction in consumption saved the equivalent of over 84,000 boiled kettles.

From the research conducted for this workbook, it is clear that the focus on an overarching 'theme' and the promotion of 'good causes' does not have to be an 'either/or' situation. In identifying where you would like to focus most of your activity, it should be possible to identify at least one broad theme which has some resonance with you or your family. This might be supporting volunteering, regenerating local businesses or tackling homelessness. Equally, there may be particular communities you wish to represent, eg disabled people, refugees, vulnerable older people or disadvantaged children. Alternatively, your interests may lay in the cultural heritage or the buildings and architecture of the area, leading you to consider supporting something like a theatre restoration project.

Whatever personal focus you may have and whatever specific goals you may wish to identify, it is likely that these can be aligned with the corporate priorities and objectives of your council so that there is some demonstrable link between the two (see Derby City Council case study). Early discussions with the mayor's office, council leader and other relevant executive members will help to ensure that your planned focus is complementary to, rather than independent of, the council's wider work. This need not, in any way, cut across the strong personal commitment you are likely to bring to the mayoralty and any fundraising activities you wish to support.

In essence, this is about being specific from the outset about what you wish to achieve in the tenure of the post. It allows you to aim for a clear set of results to demonstrate your successes at the end of your civic year. The planning of a proactive programme will help you to steer clear of irrelevant and unnecessary tasks in the months ahead and enable you to devote your valuable and limited time to those activities which will make a real difference to your chosen theme.



Exercise 3 – deciding on your personal mayoral theme

You may already have a clear idea about the type of personal theme you wish to adopt in your year as mayor. If not, it may help to ask yourself how much you really know about the nature of your council area and the challenges which face your resident communities. By doing so, you may identify an issue or topic which you wish to research further and which could become the focus or theme for your period of office. Answering the following questions will help with this process:

What are your council's corporate aims or priorities for the area and which one do you most closely identify yourself with personally?

How many different languages are spoken in your council area? Are some minority groups in the area struggling to integrate into the settled community?

How many disabled people live in your council area? Are there any particularly disadvantaged groups that struggle to get support or recognition locally?

How many people in the council area are unemployed? What initiatives are in place locally to tackle the challenge of worklessness?

What did the most recent crime statistics reveal about offending in the council area? What initiatives have been introduced to encourage local communities to help tackle crime and disorder?

How many people locally are homeless or live in inadequate rented accommodation? Who speaks up for these people and tries to make a difference to their lives?

Dealing with rules and protocol

Your council's civic handbook (or equivalent) should provide you with all relevant information on the official procedures related to your ceremonial duties as mayor. This may include:

- **The badge or chain of office.** This is used to signify the position of mayor. Normally this would be worn whenever the mayor is on official business.
- **Appropriate clothing and insignia.** Where these exist, there are likely to be generally accepted rules for the wearing of robes, chains and other items.
- **The official car.** There are likely to be strict rules about using any official car and chauffeur. These rules may include where you sit in the vehicle during civic events. Some councils have no official transport and may require their mayor to meet any incidental expenses from the personal allowance they are granted.
- **The mayor's office and parlour.** Your council is likely to provide specific accommodation to enable you to undertake your duties and host visiting guests. Staff in the mayor's office will usually manage this accommodation and provide advice on what can and cannot be done with such assets.



Further guidance on civic protocol

The book *Civic Ceremonial* was first published half a century ago and still serves as the definitive text on civic protocol in this country. Updated to reflect recent changes affecting both the local government sector and the office of mayor, it covers a wealth of material, including the legal position of the mayor, finance and allowances, royal visits, a code of conduct, insignia and regalia, and civic ceremonial events.

Civic Ceremonial – A Handbook, History and Guide for Mayors, Councillors and Officers (5th edition), Sweet & Maxwell, 2007.

One of the areas you must pay careful attention to in your role as mayor is the acceptance of gifts and hospitality. In particular:

1. You should treat with extreme caution any offer of gift, favour or hospitality that is made to you personally. 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
2. There are no hard and fast rules about the acceptance or refusal of hospitality or tokens of goodwill. For instance, working lunches may be a proper way of doing business. Likewise, it may be reasonable for a member to represent the council at a social function or event organised by an outside body.
3. You are personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in local government.

Your monitoring officer may have issued specific guidance on the acceptance and declaration of gifts that will help you decide how best to deal with any gifts or hospitality which you are offered while in office. In the absence of any specific guidance, and for the avoidance of any uncertainty, you would be wise to declare any item received by way of a gift – whether kept personally or not – whatever its notional value.

Similarly, while it would be impractical to try to place a notional value on any hospitality you receive during any formal engagements (for example on food and drink provided) you should still ‘declare’ your weekly programme of events in the spirit of openness.

Working to a proactive programme

NACO has suggested that mayors should aim to develop a proactive programme of activities for their period of office focused on ‘quality engagements’. These are engagements which contribute directly to the mayor’s personal theme or goals and which are linked, in turn, to the council’s corporate objectives (see text box below ‘Identifying a programme of quality engagements’).

There is an expectation that a large proportion of engagements should be local. With this in mind, NACO also recommends that the mayor’s office should establish a performance indicator to measure (as a percentage of the total) the number of engagements which are attended within the local authority boundary, and to work towards a target for this. Those councils that have adopted this performance indicator are typically working towards a target of 90 per cent of engagements being ‘within boundary’ on the basis that it is local people who are funding the mayoralty and that they should receive most benefit from the civic programme.

How you develop your particular programme of engagements and monitor the performance of your office will clearly be a matter for you to discuss and agree with your dedicated support staff. But some early thought about the types of engagements you might wish to give preference to will certainly help get you off on the right track. It will also ensure that everyone in your team is focused on making the best use of your limited time to achieve your stated goals.



Identifying a programme of quality engagements

NACO has classified the full range of mayoral engagements into seven main categories. While all types of engagement have their place, NACO has weighted and ranked the different categories to suggest an order of importance. These rankings can help decide which activities a mayor should focus on. These categories, and some examples of the types of events they refer to, are:

1. **promoting** – the council or partnership initiatives, inward investment
2. **community** – local amateur theatres, sports club events
3. **civic hosting** – receptions, buffets, or banquets in connection with the previous two categories
4. **council/statutory/tradition** – chairing council meetings, attending Remembrance Day ceremonies
5. **charities** – fundraising events
6. **social** – entertaining work colleagues or ward party members
7. **civic circuit** – visiting other authorities for civic dinners, church services.

Some mayor's offices now use a points-scoring system linked to these categories to identify which engagements are contributing most value to the mayoral programme.

For more information go to:

<http://naco.leicester.gov.uk/home/publications/naco-pamphlet-series/>

As part of your proactive approach, you should also discuss with the mayor's office some of the practical ways of monitoring and evaluating your engagements and activities to ensure that they are conducted in the most economic, efficient and effective manner. Some ideas you may wish to consider are the use of exit cards or feedback and evaluation forms to capture the views of people attending mayoral functions, or questionnaires for those who organised events that you were invited to attend. The latter can help in collecting feedback after the event on your promptness in responding to the initial invitation, your punctuality

in arriving at the engagement and the appropriateness of any speech you were asked to deliver.

Developing a network and making connections

One of your key challenges as mayor will be to bring together individuals and groups to promote a wider common purpose – usually the theme that you have adopted as the focus for your civic year and/or the good causes you have chosen to support for fundraising purposes.

In doing this you are likely to require the expertise not only of staff in the mayor's office, but also the public relations or communications staff employed by your council. As with any other media or communications plan, there will be four basic questions that you will need to be clear about:

- **What do you want to achieve from the campaign?** Are you just trying to broadcast information to people, or do you want to prompt a response or some action?
- **Who is your audience?** Are they local businesses, partner agencies or specific voluntary and community groups? Or is it all constituents?
- **What is your key message?** If you could distil the overall campaign message down into a few words, what would that key message be? What message would grab the headlines?
- **What is the best format for maximum impact?** Should it be a mayoral speech, press release, e-mail, blog or newsletter, or a campaign made up of all of these?

Your main aims will be to set the agenda for your mayoral campaign and to recruit supporters and allies for the successful delivery of your proactive programme. The higher your profile, the better your influence is likely to be – both inside and outside of the council.

In fact, your success may be heavily influenced by your own ability to communicate and your skills in managing media perceptions of your achievements. So if this sounds daunting, consult with your public relations specialists and consider some further media and communications training.



The risks of poor communication

- Failure to broadcast the essence of the mayor's campaign and recruit allies.
- The potential waste of resources.
- An erosion of trust between the mayor and their supporters.
- Damage to the mayor's personal reputation.
- Potential damage to the wider reputation of the council.



Exercise 4 – planning a media and communications campaign

Consider how you would plan the communications for the following mayoral campaign. In doing so, consider the following basic questions:

- What do you want to achieve from the campaign?
- Who is your audience?
- What is your key message?
- What are the best communication formats for maximum impact?

Your mayoral campaign is focused on creating some new initiatives for young people between the ages of 14 and 18. One of your ideas is to create a 'youth cabinet'. This would be a representative group of young people from the council area that can debate issues affecting their peer group and comment on council plans and services for young people.

Look again at your communications plan. Were you planning to do more than just awareness-raising on the issue? After all, you would probably want young people to come forward as potential representatives.

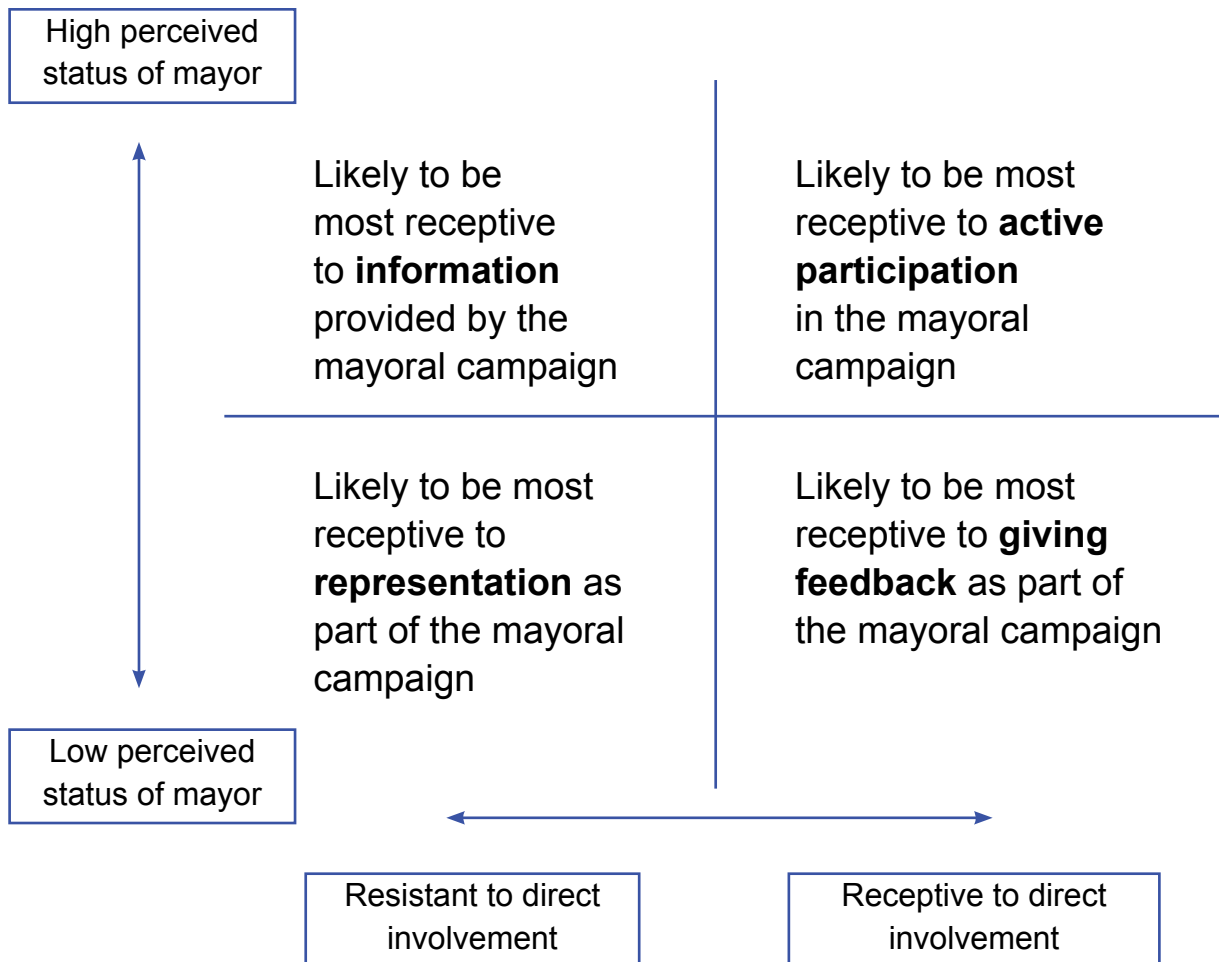
Your target audience may at first seem obvious and very specific (young people), but what about their parents or guardians, and local schools and colleges? Wouldn't you want to 'sell' the concept to them as well, to encourage a good response?

What headline grabber have you come up with? Is it sufficiently persuasive to engage, encourage and enthuse a potentially skeptical young person? And what about your chosen format – is it likely to be the best channel of communication for a media-aware and technologically-savvy audience?

In recruiting a network of supporters and allies you should recognise that not everyone will want to participate to the same extent. While some people will want to actively participate (perhaps by joining a fundraising committee), others will be content to let you represent their interests (for example major donors) or just want to be kept informed about how the campaign is going (for example your local media contacts).

Much of this will depend on people's perceptions of the status of the mayoralty and their personal willingness to get directly involved (see diagram).

The mayoral campaign – recruiting a network of supporters



How people are likely to respond to you, and what they are likely to be willing to do, depends upon how much importance they attach to your role as mayor – the perceived status – and how willing (receptive or resistant) they are to the idea of having a direct involvement. You will need to involve them in different ways depending upon where they are in the grid.

Handling the media

A key feature of your mayoral campaign is likely to be the development of a proactive relationship with your local media. This is a relationship in which you will have to invest both time and effort. While there is a generally held assumption that local government gets a 'bad press', the evidence suggests that the local media, if handled in the right way, is willing to present local government in a positive light.

Some councils have protocols governing the issuing of press releases and speaking to the local media. Check with your public relations team before planning any media communications.

At the end of the day, journalists from local press, television and radio just want a story to cover. But remember that these stories may often be the main source of information on local government for residents. You will need to use your communication skills to ensure that the stories journalists write are balanced and accurate, because this could be the main way people learn about your mayoral campaign.

Developing good media relations will require you to understand the nature of their reporting processes. In the first instance, identify all of the relevant media channels in your area. This could include newspapers, special publications, radio stations, television, internet sites, noticeboards and exhibition sites. Then make a list of contacts within these, along with telephone numbers, e-mail and postal addresses. Most importantly, find out their deadlines, publication dates and reporting guidelines. Try to develop some personal contact and rapport with the individuals concerned, and remember – you're in this for the long term.



Handling the media

Don't respond to press calls that come out of the blue. Ask for background information and a deadline, then respond when you have prepared your answer.

Think of key messages and good, punchy quotes you can give to the media.

Don't point the finger, complain or consistently say 'no comment'. This could get you a bad reputation.

Build a long-term relationship with the media. For example, write letters and suggest news stories.

Don't use jargon or council-speak, and don't use inflammatory words – these might come back to haunt you.

Act quickly and have a consistent approach to media enquiries. Be honest, concise and helpful.

Don't try to win every battle, but over time certainly aim to win the war of words.

Beyond the development of a positive, two-way relationship with your local media, the main task is to sell your campaign message in all communications. In other words, always be thinking 'how will this come across to my audience?' The following approach should help:

- Make sure the message is relevant to the intended audience. For example, don't bombard afternoon radio listeners with a long list of facts and figures about your role as mayor – many will switch off (literally).
- Ask yourself: 'what's in it for them?' Build in elements that will keep people listening or reading.
- Try to keep your communications topical. The audience is unlikely to want to hear too much about what you did as mayor six months ago.
- Keep your communications short and succinct and come straight to the point – remember your key message designed to grab the headlines.
- Build in some interesting or unusual features to get your point across when communicating with the media. Offer a good quote, one or two helpful statistics or a catchy motto or slogan (but nothing too clichéd).

- Photographs, illustrations, charts or diagrams can be a useful addition when offering a written feature to the press, but remember – 'if a picture paints a thousand words' don't use a thousand words as well.
- Make sure you have adhered to the submission guidelines or house style of the media concerned.
- Focus, wherever possible, on the human angle. People want to read about people.

Getting your point across – effective speechmaking

Civic mayors are often called upon to make speeches when attending engagements. There may be occasions when, despite having received previous assurances that there will be no talks, you are called upon to give an impromptu speech. As such, you should always be prepared to say a few words at an engagement. This reinforces the need to do your research on the people you are visiting beforehand and to read thoroughly any briefing papers you have been given prior to the event. This will help you to say something relevant.

For some individuals, public speaking holds no fears, while for others it is considered a difficult and onerous task. But in practice it becomes easier the more you get used to the role.

As with all of the other aspects of your communications, effective speechmaking can help you to get your message across and recruit supporters for your wider campaign.



Exercise 5 – grabbing the headlines

Imagine you have been asked to give a press briefing in the situation below:

Your mayoral campaign is focused on promoting local employment. In your six months in office you have worked with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to create new paid employment opportunities for around 1,000 local people and have assisted 500 others to undertake some form of training to update their skills and increase their employability.

a) Using no more than seven words identify what your key message might be.

b) List the three main things you would want to achieve from the press communication.

c) List any particular features you would want to build into your press release to ensure that your message gets across in the way that you want it to.

Staying in control

The mayor's office can help you with the administrative back-up needed during your civic year and staff will be invaluable in helping you to manage your diary. As part of your role, you may want to maintain an overview of the financial expenditure of your office to ensure that any agreed budgets are not exceeded.

You should also monitor your personal financial affairs and tax liabilities. For example, the Inland Revenue has no special rules exempting payments to mayors from tax. Unless an item of expenditure is 'wholly, exclusively necessary for the performance of duty' it will be subject to tax.

There is a lot to being first citizen and good financial, administrative and event management procedures will help you to concentrate your attention on the activities that will contribute most to your mayoral campaign.



Effective speechmaking

Adjust your style to suit the audience – from formal to informal.

Don't rush, even though this is very easy to do when you are nervous.

Break the ice with a simple, topical joke about being mayor.

Speak loudly and clearly – but don't shout.

Look at your audience – not at the floor.

Smile – but don't be over-familiar.

Practice beforehand and check your timing.

Be prepared for an impromptu speech. Carry cards of key notes in your pocket that can be held discreetly during the speech.



Being first citizen: further hints and tips from former mayors

"Set out what you want to achieve in the tenure of the post and review that as time goes on."

"Remember that when you are wearing chains, someone is always watching you."

"Always remember the courtesy, humility, responsibility and the honour of the position."

"Try to remember that you are the public face of the borough, and even if your feet are killing you, try not to show it."

"Never be a judge in competitions, particularly children's competitions – you will please a few but upset many."

"Listen to your chauffeurs – they know far more than you."

Chairing council meetings

The basics

Legally, your primary duty as civic mayor is to act as chairman in presiding over meetings of your full council. In this role, you must ensure the proper conduct of meetings in compliance with both the law and the council's own Standing Orders and procedural rules. You are also required to:

- Determine whether urgent items may be considered at a council meeting without prior notice
- Decide whether or not to call an extraordinary meeting of the council
- Exercise, if you wish to, a 'casting' vote at council in the event of an equal vote on any issues. In the role, you will be advised by the council's monitoring officer and chief executive.

During your term of office, you are expected to remain politically impartial, particularly in relation to sensitive political issues. Your political colleagues should support you in this and respect your neutrality, enabling the office of mayor to be seen as 'above politics'.

Effective chairing

Committee meetings are a mainstay of the political management process and it is your job to ensure that the business of the council is conducted effectively in the council chamber.

There are no hard and fast rules about how you chair a council meeting. The approach you take and the style you adopt will depend largely on the nature of the meeting, the people involved and your own personality.



Acting 'above politics'

"It should not normally be part of the mayor's role to comment on matters before the council in a way which supports or opposes the issue before council. On limited occasions this may be necessary either because of the mayor's duty to represent his or her constituents or where personal views are strongly felt..."

"It is important that the mayor maintains an apolitical stance especially when chairing council meetings. It is a requirement that the chairman of the council must act entirely neutrally allowing different opinions to be fully and fairly represented and debated subject to Standing Orders."

Civic Protocol, Borough of Rossendale, 2011

One of the key tasks, however, will be to encourage participation and prompt discussion. This is primarily about creating the best conditions for others to engage in debate. Only through discussion can you understand what people think and where they stand on any given subject.

Chairing council meetings can sometimes be a demanding process because of the personalities involved. People respond in different and sometimes unpredictable ways when trying to convince others of their point of view, particularly when this is overlaid with the essential politics of local government. Arguments are common and conflict is not unusual. This is true enough in one to one situations, but is particularly so in committee meetings.

Recognising that people often behave differently in committees can help you, tactically, to be more effective in chairing meetings. Much of this is about watching and listening to group behaviour and using your own judgement about when to intervene and when to sit back as discussions unfold and people exchange views or come into conflict. For example:

- Who is contributing the most and least to the council's debates – are they aware of it and could you challenge them?
- Who are the silent members – is their silence about dissent or fear and could your intervention encourage them to be more vocal?
- What is the atmosphere – could you mediate to create more congenial conditions?
- Have the discussions reached a sticking point – could you broker some negotiation or compromise to move things forward?
- Who are the rebels, bullies, critics and scapegoats – can you employ different tactics to deal with each?



Importance of effective chairing

Effective chairing can:

Provide for clear leadership and direction, ensuring that discussions are held within some framework for debate, that is based on an agreed agenda and adhering to established ground-rules, Standing Orders and the ethical governance framework of the council.

Ensure that debates are focused and balanced involving discussion from all members who wish to articulate a view, particularly where conflicting opinions are being expressed.

Enable decisions to be reached, allowing members to agree on the way forward and any further action that needs to be taken, eg there may be a need to allocate scarce resources to meet agreed priorities.

Contribute to team working, allowing members to build rapport and contribute to committee discussions. This can often help to inform, unite and inspire people.

Ensure that resources are used to best effect, saving time and energy and allowing information, views and evidence to be gathered in an efficient and timely manner.

As well as dealing with the inevitable political wrangling, you must remain impartial in dealing with the personalities involved. By being seen to be firm but even-handed in your chairing role, you should be able to articulate the areas of common ground that can help in building consensus on the contentious issues.



Exercise 6 – managing the personalities

Imagine you are chairing a full council meeting and are confronted with the following characters. Identify what tactics you would employ to deal with each.

- i) A noisy and aggressive member who insists on shouting people down when they disagree with her.
-
- ii) A member who has a tendency to be long-winded in sharing his views, to the agitation of others.
-



Chairing council meetings: hints and tips from former mayors

Be seen to be apolitical	Be firm, but fair to all sides. Look in all directions when inviting contributions and note who is waiting to speak.
Know your Standing Orders	Know them without having to look them up, particularly those related to the rules of debate, motions, seconders, amendments, voting, points of order and personal explanations.
Keep to time	Be punctual, stick to the agenda and don't let individual members 'hijack' the debate.
Be attentive to the subject under discussion	Prepare well and read the agenda papers thoroughly. Know what the 'hot topics' are and the points of likely contention.
Have pre-meetings with officers	Get to know what is really going on behind the scenes so that you can distance yourself from the contentious issues.
Be human	Keep calm, remain tolerant and be polite. Remember that a sense of humour can help in the right situations. Facilitate, don't dominate.
Use the support available	Ask for the advice of your officers if you feel exposed.

The mayor as the ‘conscience of the council’

As mayor you should be seen to respond to and reflect the mood of your citizens and your councillors. This is particularly important in times of crisis and celebration. In some council constitutions this is described as being ‘the conscience of the council’.

The public outpouring of grief following events such as the death of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997 and the World Trade Center attack in 2001 highlights the importance of this aspect of the role. After the initial shock of such events, people want to know what they can do, and what the council will do. As the public face of the council you will be expected to give a lead.

Or consider events such as the Haiti earthquake in 2010. You might need to make an early statement after a natural disaster, expressing sympathy, offering support to local citizens who may have family in the affected area and calling on the generosity of the community to support the appropriate relief committee or a relevant local aid organisation. Again this may be particularly relevant where there are close cultural links with the affected area. This could be because you are twinned with the affected place, or you have a large community originally from the area.

In these situations doing nothing is not an option and it is the mayor, as the first citizen and as chair of the council, who should give a lead to the community and speak on its behalf. There are likely to be two parts to your message:

- Sympathy to the families and communities directly affected
- Guidance to your own community on what they can do to help and how they can express their own feelings.

In some situations protocols may have to be re-written or invented to deal with the public angst.



Mayor urges Reading folk to help Haiti

The following was published on The Reading Post website www.getreading.co.uk on 26 January 2010:

The Mayor of Reading is urging the townsfolk to give as much as they can afford to help the people affected by the recent disastrous earthquake in Haiti.

Mayor Fred Pugh commended the generosity of the town’s residents but urged everyone to donate whatever they can to give further help to the many thousands of people affected by the catastrophic earthquake that hit the Caribbean island on Tuesday, January 12.

Councillor Pugh said: ‘As always, the people of Reading have already shown extraordinary generosity to the thousands of people who have lost everything - family members, friends, homes and their livelihood.

‘I thank all those who have already given so much, and I would implore anyone who still wishes to play their part in helping the people of Haiti to make a donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee, which is co-ordinating aid efforts in Britain.

‘Your donation can make a real difference to the lives of Haitians trying to recover from this terrible natural disaster.’

Civic Protocol, Borough of Rossendale, 2011

The role of the mayor's office

Throughout the civic year, the mayor's office will provide you with the essential support you need to carry out your civic and ceremonial duties. This will include:

- Managing the civic diary and providing secretarial and administrative back-up
- Sorting out your travel arrangements, including managing a civic vehicle or hiring transport
- Organising civic events and ceremonies such as parades, receptions and services
- Receiving and following up invitations to functions and engagements
- Arranging appropriate events in the mayor's parlour (these are likely to be subject to council rules and guidelines)
- Giving proper briefings and advice as necessary
- Managing the budgets for the mayoralty
- Liaising with the local press
- Providing advice on speech writing
- Providing appropriate support for your charity appeal (this may be subject to internal council rules)
- Preparing any necessary reports for the council.

It is essential that you develop good working relationships with support staff from the outset because effective two-way communication will be vital. To underpin this, you will need to do the following:

- Remember that your support staff are council employees and there are likely to be rules and guidelines about what they can and cannot do. Familiarise yourself with these and seek clarification if necessary.
- Articulate your personal goals and anticipated campaign at the start of the civic year to enable the mayor's office to build these objectives into their departmental business plan. Once this plan is agreed it will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that everything remains on track throughout your period of office.
- Attend weekly briefing meetings with senior staff to let them know your plans and whereabouts and to enable you to keep abreast of any developments that could impact on the mayoralty. It is useful to remember that it is likely to be more practical and productive to discuss matters at regular briefing meetings rather than constantly 'popping in' unannounced.

While it is likely that you will come to see the mayor's office as part of your extended team, you should remember that these staff will not 'report to you' in a managerial sense. They will be line-managed by senior officers of the council and any comments or concerns you may have about their performance should be taken up with the appropriate manager. Their relationship with you should be professional and supportive, without being overly familiar.



Exercise 7 – who’s in your office?

Using the table below, or on a spare sheet of paper, make a list of those in your mayor’s office together with their role or job title. In the remaining column list the main ways each can help you in your role.

Name	Post or role	How they can help

You might like to discuss your responses with your civic officer or manager.

Final summary

All of the former mayors who contributed to the research for this workbook spoke affectionately about their term of office, while recognising some of the challenges and pitfalls they faced.

For some, the overwhelming memories of the civic year were the royal garden parties, remembrance services and high-profile functions they attended as first citizen. Others reflected on the warmth, generosity and diversity of the people they met of all ages and from all walks of life. Some retained, above all else, a sense of pride in what they had achieved, or inspired others to do.

Every former mayor has their own story to tell and each helped to bring their personal style and flair to the position. As one individual commented: 'Just because something has always been done that way does not mean you cannot change it.'

For some, leaving office was an emotional and draining experience. Many reported that it was difficult to re-adjust after the intense period of the mayoralty. Their hints and tips on what to do at the end of the civic year are both helpful and revealing.



“A mayor reaches places and people that other politicians and people cannot.

‘They can be instrumental in developing things, and can encourage and make them happen [...] because they cannot be accused of some ulterior motive or some other hidden agenda.’

Former mayor of a London borough



Ending your civic year: hints and tips from former mayors

“Take a holiday to get away from it all – spend some time with your family.”

“Get back to being a councillor as soon as you can – use what you’ve learnt.”

“Sigh with relief – you’ve got your own life back.”

“Try to organise all the records of your year of office before time moves on too much, otherwise you will never get around to sorting all the press cuttings and letters.”

“Keep away from events in the first year that the incoming mayor may be at.”

“Serve as a mentor for others taking on the role (if asked).”

“Make plans to fill your life in advance – [it’s] a chance for new hobbies or interests.”



Where do you go from here?

Look back over the material contained in earlier sections of this workbook and consider the following:

(a) What further action points can you identify in your preparations for the role of civic mayor? What things might you start doing, keep doing or stop doing?

(b) Have you identified any gaps in your knowledge or shortcomings in your personal skills? If so, set these out below and identify how any further training or development might help you. Would you benefit from further reading and research, attending courses, mentoring, or work shadowing for example?

Appendix A

Sources of further information and support

Printed publications

Civic Ceremonial – A Handbook, History and Guide for Mayors, Councillors and Officers (5th Edition), Paul Millward, Sweet & Maxwell.

Civic Ceremonial – Advice on Protocol to the Mayors of the London Boroughs, edited by Robert Davis, Simon Walsh and Edward Lord, The London Mayor's Association (LMA).

Civic Handbooks: A Best Practice Guide, Paul Millward, National Association of Civic Officers (NACO).

Surviving Scrutiny: A 21st Century Civic Office, Philip O'Brien, NACO.

The Advent of the Electronic Civic Diary, Civic Support Section (Leicester City Council), NACO.

The Councillor (13th Edition), Paul Clayden, Sweet & Maxwell.

Useful websites

www.local.gov.uk

The website of the Local Government Group is an invaluable source of help and advice for all those in local government.

www.londonmayors.org.uk

The website of the London Mayor's Association (LMA) is a non-party political body which brings together all the civic mayors of the London boroughs. The LMA exists to promote and manage the civic ceremonial life of London and support the community leadership role of the civic mayor.

<http://naco.leicester.gov.uk/>

The National Association of Civic Officers was started in 1999 and is the largest and most active organisation for civic staff. Its website provides a range of resources which members may find useful, including a series of free pamphlets on a range of relevant subjects. For example, they have produced a best practice guide to civic handbooks (see 'printed publications' section above).

www.public-standards.gov.uk

This is the website of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. This includes reports and research relevant to the development of ethical governance in public bodies.

Appendix B

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