

Chairman of Council - Protocol Guidance

When extending an invitation to the Chairman of Billingham Parish Council, a host organisation should be aware of the protocols. These will cover such elements as meeting and greeting, speeches, seating, and other areas where guidance may be helpful.

The Chairman of Billingham Parish Council is nominated and normally takes office in May, having often already undertaken a year as Vice-Chairman.

Forms of Address, Speeches and seating

When introducing it should be 'Chairman of Billingham Parish Council, Councillor' and his/her consort as 'Mr/Mrs/Dr ...'

When referring to the Chairman in a speech of any description, they should be addressed as 'Chairman of the Council'. If speaking on a one-to-one basis, the correct form of address is 'Mr Chairman', if a gentleman, or 'Madam Chairman', if a lady. On some occasions the Chairman may encourage hosts to use his/her name after the formal introduction.

If the Chairman is visiting an organisation and he/she is the only 'civic' present, then the host will initially meet and greet him/her. The Chairman should be seated on the immediate right of the host, both at table or in allocated seating (e.g. village hall). The Chairman's Consort should be seated on the direct left of the host – unless other arrangements have been agreed with the Clerk and or Chairman.

If making a speech and the Lord-Lieutenant is in attendance and other visiting dignitaries, the order in which they should be addressed at the beginning of a speech is 'Lord Lieutenant, High Sherriff, Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen'. Alternatively, on these occasions in any address the host may prefer to use the opening "Honoured Guests", to cover all the civic dignitaries present rather than listing them in order.

If the Chairman is required to speak (as host), either in welcome or in response to a welcome by another (as main guest), it is essential for the Clerk to have sufficient notice of this. It is not appropriate for the Chairman to contribute to the 'housekeeping' information (such as fire exits, etc.) for the event.

Correspondence/Invites

When writing to the Chairman the letter should be addressed to 'The Chairman of Billingham Parish Council, Council Offices, Ringmoor House, Ringmoor Close, Billingham, Lincolnshire LN4 4EX'.

Letters should begin "Dear Chairman". Invitations should not be directed to the Vice-Chairman, even when it is known that the Chairman is unavailable. The decision to pass on invitations to the Vice-Chairman is made by the Chairman.

The Chairman does not solicit invitations to events, although he/she may make it known that he/she has a theme for his/her year of office which he/she wishes to pursue. If a host is unsure whether the Chairman would wish to attend any event, they should make the invitation rather than wait for an approach from the Chairman's office. All invitations are answered and the Chairman endeavours to attend as many functions and events as possible.

Consort/Spouse

Hosts are recommended to invite all civic spouses or none to an event. Where it is known that civic spouses are involved, the Chairman will usually take his/her own consort.

Chain of Office

Billinghay Parish Council does not have formal Chains of Office. When the Chairman attends a function, they will not wear a Chain of Office.

Precedence

The Chairman takes precedence over all other civic dignitaries unless the Lord-Lieutenant (or a Deputy) is representing The Queen, or there are 'special circumstances' which have been agreed beforehand.

In an event primarily run by a District or Town/Parish Council within another District, the Chairman/Mayor of that locality is host and takes precedence. In any event, the district Chairman takes precedence over all his guests, unless The Queen is represented at the event by the Lord-Lieutenant or a Deputy Lieutenant.

If several Chairmen from different Councils are attending a single function, their offices will ask permission from the host district or Town/Parish for each to wear their Chain or Badge to the event.

Gifts

The Chairman must avoid any involvement in political or contentious issues. If a host wishes to offer the Chairman a gift, it needs to be clearly stated if this is for the Council or is intended as a personal gift. All personal gifts are registered officially.