

Northamptonshire Civic Protocol

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The administrative bodies of the county of Northamptonshire comprise the two unitary authorities of North and West Northamptonshire Council, having the status of district councils, and a number of town and parish councils.
- 1.2 Northamptonshire has a rich history and civic tradition which these administrative bodies wish to celebrate and preserve.
- 1.3 Northampton is recognised as being the historic county town and the town council in this locality will therefore often work in partnership with the office of the Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire when delivering events which relate to all members of the county (such as Remembrance Day).
- 1.4 It is noted that Northampton Town Council has had the civic role of Mayor conferred to them. The Mayoralty was transferred to the Town Council under Clause 14 of the *'Northampton Borough Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) No 1 (Northampton Parish Council) Order 2020'*.
- 1.5 It is also noted that there is no legal difference between the status of a chair of a parish council and a Mayor. This protocol seeks to address all those who have civic duties.
- 1.6 It may be appropriate for the county flag of Northamptonshire to be flown on occasion. The district, towns and parish councils will determine the use of the Northamptonshire flag through their own flag protocols. The Northamptonshire flag is depicted below:



2. Purpose of the Civic Protocol

- 2.1 The Northamptonshire Civic Protocol sets out an agreed county wide approach to the civic function and how it is delivered across the county.

3. Civic Figures in Northamptonshire

- 3.1 Prior to 2021 the councils had played integral parts in the “civic” functions of the county and parish and town Councils played their parts in their own localities.
- 3.2 Since 2021 Northamptonshire is a ceremonial county only, with limited entities operating throughout the county area.
- 3.3 In civic terms, the Lieutenancy and Shrievalty are the most prominent and the order of precedence is set out in the Lieutenancy protocol (see Appendix 1).
- 3.4 The major Civic figures in Northamptonshire today are:

- HM Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire¹
- The High Sheriff of Northamptonshire²
- The Chairmen of West and North Northants Councils
- The Mayor of Northampton Town Council
- The other Town Councils of Northamptonshire, represented by their town Mayors:
 - The Mayors of Burton Latimer, Corby, Desborough, Finedon, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough, Kettering, Oundle, Raunds, Rothwell, Rushden, Thrapston, and Wellingborough in North Northamptonshire.
 - The Mayors of Brackley, Daventry, and Towcester in West Northamptonshire.
- The Chairs of the Parish Councils of Northamptonshire
- The Chairs of the Parish meetings of Northamptonshire

3.5 It is noted that whilst the formal title is traditionally Chairman or Mayor, those in office may choose to go by an alternate title such as Chairwoman, Chairperson or Mayoress.

4. Defining the Civic Function

4.1 In summary, the role of the civic community is:

- To recognise and demonstrate support and encouragement to deserving individuals and organisations of Northamptonshire
- To preserve, commemorate and mark significant and historical events.
- To raise the profile of West Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire, and the county of Northamptonshire as an area
- To support local businesses and charities across the county
- To support and promote the visitor economy of Northamptonshire

5. Review and Administration of the Northamptonshire Civic Protocol

5.1 The civic protocol for the county of Northamptonshire will be reviewed annually by the Northamptonshire County Civic Working Group.

5.2 The Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire and his office shall administer the protocol and provide clarity or decisions should there be any dispute.

¹ The Office of HM Lord-Lieutenant and the Deputy Lieutenants commissioned by that Office are ‘the Lieutenancy’

² The individual holding the Office of High Sheriff of Northamptonshire, those who have formerly held the Office of High Sheriff of Northamptonshire, and the Under Sheriff of Northamptonshire are referred to collectively as ‘the Shrievalty’ of the county.

PROTOCOL FOR INVOLVEMENT OF CIVIC REPRESENTATIVES

Organisers of commemorative or other events usually recognise that the event is enhanced by the presence of a civic leader or “dignitary”. This note is a guide agreed with the civic heads across the county of Northamptonshire to assist event organisers in choosing and engaging the appropriate civic guest(s).

6. The Lieutenancy

The fundamental principle concerning the office of the Lord-Lieutenant is that they are His Majesty’s representative in their county and consequently it is their first and foremost duty to uphold the dignity of the Crown.

In this role the Lord-Lieutenant:

- Supports The King in His capacity as 'Head of Nation' in which The Sovereign acts as a focus for national identity, unity, and pride.
- Gives a sense of stability and continuity.
- Recognises success and excellence.
- Supports the ideal of voluntary service.
- Maintains respect for the Monarchy through valuable community networks.
- Organises and/or assists with Royal Visits within the county.
- Promotes and assesses nominations for honours and awards.
- Supports local units of the Armed Forces.
- Represents The King, including duties with the military and presenting honours and awards.
- Leads the local magistracy (England and Wales only).

The Lord-Lieutenant will follow the example of The King and other Members of the Royal Family in seeking to promote a good atmosphere and a spirit of co-operation by the encouragement they give to voluntary service, and to benevolent organisations, and by the interest they take in the business, industrial and social life of their county.

The Lord-Lieutenant’s role is non-political. The Lord-Lieutenant and their representatives should always avoid being involved in controversy which might lead to the impartiality of the office being questioned. As the King’s representative, the Lord-Lieutenant and their Deputy Lieutenants should stand aloof from politics in their county and therefore not take part in political activities or hold office in political parties.

Northamptonshire’s Lord-Lieutenant wishes to use the Lieutenancy’s collective influence to make a positive impact across the county, and to increase the representative make-up of the Lieutenancy so that it better reflects the diversity of Northamptonshire’s population. The Lord-Lieutenant believes the Lieutenancy should be a bridge-builder, connecting individuals, organisations, and social networks, to enhance a sense of belonging in the county and thus increase social inclusion.

The Lord-Lieutenant is required to appoint a Vice Lord-Lieutenant and several Deputy Lieutenants to assist with duties and act as their representatives. Only in certain

circumstances do Deputy Lieutenants represent The King, such as for the presentation of honours and awards when requested to do so by the Lord-Lieutenant.

A Deputy Lieutenant commission may be regarded as an honour and Deputy Lieutenants are entitled to use the post-nominal “DL” after their name when using the formal style. Deputy Lieutenants will be expected to continue their engagement within the county in whatever capacity they are able.

Deputy Lieutenants are reminded to take care of the reputational risks associated with the use of social media. The primary criterion for appointment is that of appropriate service, local distinction, and a commitment to continuing service, together with residence in, or within seven miles from the county boundary.

All Members of the Lieutenancy are volunteers and unpaid. The retirement age for all is 75. Commissions do not lapse with the demise of the Crown or the demise or retirement of the Lord-Lieutenant.

The Lord-Lieutenant appoints Deputy Lieutenants so that they can undertake duties on their behalf and has specific qualifications in mind, including:

- Sharing the Lieutenancy’s values.
- Evidencing a personal commitment to social inclusion and a willingness to contribute to the delivery of the Lieutenancy Strategy.
- Having skills and experience currently missing from the Lieutenancy cadre.
- Displaying merit in significant service given to their country or locality.
- Continuing commitment to service within the Lieutenancy.
- Living in a particular area which can provide the Lieutenancy with greater coverage within the county.
- Having specific expertise which can contribute to the Lieutenancy’s understanding of affairs within the county.
- Demonstrating probity, honesty, and the ability to gain respect locally.

It is inappropriate that those active politically and senior officers with executive roles should be considered for appointment until their retirement from such positions. A Deputy Lieutenant wishing to stand for political election should inform the Lord-Lieutenant and Clerk and expect to step-down as an active Member of the Lieutenancy.

Members of the Lieutenancy are encouraged to:

- Proactively seek ways to deliver the Lieutenancy Strategy
- Nominate, to the Lord-Lieutenant, potential Deputy Lieutenants.
- Work collegiately with other Representative Deputy Lieutenants.
- Provide the Lord-Lieutenant with an annual report of activities undertaken during the calendar year.
- Provide the Lieutenancy Office with regular updates/articles which can be published on the Lieutenancy website.

Having been chosen based on service already given, a Deputy Lieutenant is expected to continue to serve the community both within and outside the framework of the Lieutenancy.

To underline their willingness to serve Deputy Lieutenants must, before their commissions are signed, give the Lord-Lieutenant a written assurance that they will: “to the best of their ability, assist in the performance of any public duty which may be laid upon the Lord-Lieutenant.”

Consider inviting the Lord-Lieutenant to an event:

- **To which all members of the county relate (such as Remembrance Sunday)**
- **To which a group of residents of the county particularly relate (for example, days marking Windrush, Holocaust Memorial Day)**
- **Which involves a major employer (such as a new factory opening)**
- **Which involves a community larger than is represented in a district, town, or parish**
- **In which members of the Armed Forces will participate (such as Armed Forces Day flag-raising)**
- **Where a foundation stone of a building of importance to the county is to be laid**

7. The Shrievalty

Second in precedence to the HM Lord-Lieutenant, the Office of High Sheriff³ is an independent non-political Royal appointment, by nomination, for a single year. Dating back to Saxon times, it is the oldest surviving State Office in the country, after the monarchy.

Whilst the duties of the High Sheriff have evolved over time (formerly, the chief executive officer of the Crown in the counties), supporting the Crown and the judiciary remain central elements of the role today and the High Sheriff remains the Sovereign’s representative in the County for all matters relating to the Judiciary and the maintenance of law and order. In addition, High Sheriffs actively lend support and encouragement to crime prevention agencies, the emergency services and to the voluntary sector.

High Sheriffs play an increasingly active and supportive role within their counties both in relation to the Police and emergency services and in lending encouragement to public sector agencies such as the probation and prison services and to voluntary sector organisations involved in the administration of justice, crime reduction and social cohesion. The principal formal duties of High Sheriffs today include attendance at Royal Visits in the County and support for his Majesty’s High Court Judges when on Circuit.

The holder of the Office of High Sheriff can be well placed to offer encouragement to those in their county who are engaged in supporting the voluntary sector and those most in need. Many High Sheriffs give their own personal awards to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution in some way. As the Office is independent and non-political, High Sheriffs are able to bring together a wide range of people within the community they serve.

The key elements of the modern role can be summarised as follows:

³ To avoid misapprehensions, the Shrievalty is not an organisation and does not have an administration to support it. The Offices of the Shrievalty (the High Sheriff and Under Sheriff) are held by individuals and are not funded from the public or a crown purse.

- To lend active support to the principal organs of the constitution within the county - the Royal Family, the Judiciary, the Police and other law enforcement agencies, the emergency services, local authorities, and church and faith groups.
- To ensure the welfare of visiting High Court Judges, to attend on them at Court and to offer them hospitality.
- To take an active part in supporting and promoting the voluntary sector and giving all possible encouragement to voluntary organisations within the county, particularly those involved with crime reduction and social cohesion.
- To make a meaningful contribution to the county during the year of Office and to uphold and enhance the ancient Office of High Sheriff.
- To support the Lord-Lieutenant on Royal visits and on other occasions as appropriate.
- To make awards at the direction of Judges of the Crown Court to members of the public who have assisted in bringing an offender to justice, commonly in recognition of brave or admirable conduct.
- To serve as Returning Officer for the county constituencies in parliamentary elections and having responsibility for the Proclamation of the accession of a new Sovereign.

On taking Office, the High Sheriff is required by the Sheriffs Act 1887 to appoint an Under Sheriff. The Under Sheriff supports the High Sheriff by attending to various formalities associated with the Office, acting as adviser on constitutional and legal aspects of the role and under his Warrant, deputising for the High Sheriff where necessary. Whilst appointed from year to year, it is common for the Under Sheriff to be re-appointed as this aids continuity between those retiring from Office as High Sheriff and those who follow.

If the Lord-Lieutenant is invited to an event, the High Sheriff would play a secondary role.

Consider inviting the High Sheriff to an event:

- **To which all members of the county relate (such as Remembrance Sunday)**
- **To which a group of residents of the county particularly relate (for example, days marking Windrush, Holocaust Memorial Day)**
- **Celebrating youth and other volunteer groups, particularly associated with the emergency services, such as air ambulance, witness and victim support, crime initiatives etc**
- **That promotes the long history and heritage of the county and especially the story of the constitution of the country (including, the administration of justice).**

As Returning Officer for Parliamentary elections (including byelections) in the county constituencies⁴, the High Sheriff has the constitutional prerogative of announcing the election result and should be consulted in advance as to their preference/s for the constituency/ies for the exercise of this privilege.⁵

8. Chairman of the West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire District Councils

Members of West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council elect a chairman at the annual council meeting. Once elected, the chairman is non-political and

⁴ The executive role being delegated to the Acting Returning Officer

⁵ The High Sheriff has no role in local authority elections

becomes the first citizen of the district. The Chairman will be present at all major events organised by the council. It would be rare for the chairman to participate in events held outside the district unless at the invitation of a similar civic organisation.

Consider inviting the chairman to an event taking part within the district of West Northamptonshire or North Northamptonshire:

- **Of importance in the locality**
- **Where there is likely to be attendance of 50 or so + residents**
- **Where a presentation is to be made**
- **Where a notable achievement is to be celebrated**
- **Where a significant anniversary is marked**
- **Where a performance is to be given involving members of the local community or school**
- **Where a foundation stone of a building is to be laid**

9. Town Mayors in West and North Northamptonshire

The town and parish councils elect a Mayor at their annual council meetings. Once elected the Mayor is non-political and is regarded as a leading citizen of the town or parish. The town Mayor/Chair would expect to be invited and lead all events organised by the town/parish council. It would be rare for the Mayors/Chair to participate in events held outside their own towns/parishes unless at the invitation of a similar civic organisation.

Consider inviting the town Mayor/Chair of the parish council to any event to be held within the town or parish concerned. Events typically appropriate for the town Mayor/Parish council Chair within their own towns/parishes are:

- **Open days or prize giving of schools in the town/parish**
- **Church services**
- **Concerts**
- **Fetes**
- **Firework displays**
- **Exhibitions**

10. Precedence

Occasionally event organisers will wish to invite more than one civic guest. This is typically the case on Remembrance Sunday when the Lord-Lieutenant and his Deputy Lieutenants are engaged throughout the county. On these and other formal occasions the order of precedence (laid down by statute) should be followed. The crown prerogative takes precedence in the form of the Lieutenancy and the Shrievalty (both being crown appointments), followed by the Chairman of West or North Northamptonshire council and then town Mayors and parish council Chairs. In the absence of representatives of the crown, the WNC or NNC council Chairman takes precedence and is the first citizen of the district.

When attending a county event, the Chairs of West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Councils have equal precedence.

11. Further Guidance

- When inviting a civic guest to an event it is very helpful to everybody concerned to advise which other civic heads will be in attendance.

- As all civic figures in the county are non-political, it would not be appropriate for them to attend any event which could be deemed political. This includes any events which may feature political speeches.
- Permission should always be sought from the event organiser for civic chains or robes of office to be worn at an event.
- Further guidance can be found in the National Association of Civic Officers (NACO) Civic Handbook: [NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CIVIC OFFICERS \(naco.uk.com\)](https://www.naco.uk.com).