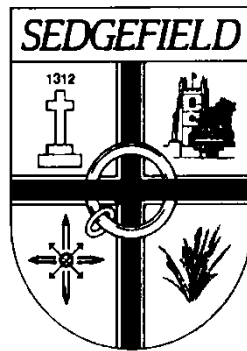


Sedgefield Town Council



MAYOR'S HANDBOOK

Passionate about Sedgefield

north east
england

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SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL MAYOR'S HANDBOOK

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This Mayor’s Handbook was adopted by the P&R Committee on 10th March 2025, it will be reviewed in March 2025 and then each March thereafter to capture the view of the out-going Mayor (as per the case pre-covid).

1. Introduction:

The aim of this Handbook is to provide an explanation as to the role of Mayor 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 Handbook also provides guidance to an incoming Mayor with advice and support as they plan and work through their civic year which will commence at the Town Council’s Annual General Meeting in one year and conclude the following May at the next Annual General Meeting when they hand over to their successor. Whilst this Handbook is not comprehensive on all matters its intention is to provide a useful source of general information during the Mayor’s year of Office and briefly describes a number of aspects including the Mayor’s role in most of the major annual functions, guidance in relation to financial matters, notes on etiquette and explanation of Town Council staffing support.

2. Is Being Mayor For You?

For those chosen or thinking of putting themselves forward, being Mayor is different from being a Councillor; it is a position with different rules, different working hours, different constraints and is 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 Mayor:

- i) **Effect on family and friends:** The Mayor will inevitably be “out of the house” more than an ordinary Councillor and often at unsocial hours. A Mayor’s

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- 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 Mayor'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 Mayor is traditionally neutral and steps 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 Mayor, 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 Mayor to acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity in the area. A Mayor 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 Mayor 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 traditional Office of Mayor. There are Chains of Office to wear and numerous protocols to follow. The public want such trappings of Office. Mayors 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 Mayor, 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) **Effects on Mayor's Partner:** The Consort will be expected to play a part in the Mayoral Role. It must, however, be stressed that whilst a Councillor is in politics because he/she wants to be, it may be difficult for his/her partner to take on such a public role.

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- viii) **Mayor’s Relationship With Other Councillors:** The Mayor 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 Mayor’s help in promoting Council initiatives and as such he/she is likely to see a wider cross-section of Council work than before.
- ix) **Mayor’s Relationship with Constituents:** The Mayor is still a Councillor and his/her constituents will still need help.

3. Role of Mayor as First Citizen:

The Mayor is the First Citizen of Sedgefield and will at all times act as the Town’s Civic Ambassador. In the role of First Citizen of the Town the Mayor must act as a focal point in times of crisis, tragedy or triumph. The role of Mayor is impartial and should remain so at all times as he/she discharges their duties. The Mayor, by virtue of their Office, can use their position to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector and mould social cohesion. A Mayor also has 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 three main roles for the Mayor in today’s local council and society:

- i) A symbol of authority – The Mayor can clearly be seen as a symbol of the Town and its Parish, with the insignia of the chains of Office. The Mayor, through the Office of Mayor and its trappings, connects the present day with the history, customs and traditions of the area and acts as a symbol of continuity.
- ii) A symbol of open society – a modern role for the Mayor is that the Office symbolises an open society. Prior to the 20th century, the choice of Mayor was, in reality, very restricted but today the First Citizen can (and does) come from any class, gender or ethnic background. The First Citizen no longer is the privilege of the white middle/upper class male and the new diversity reflects the more open and democratic society we live in.

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- iii) Expression of social cohesion – the many, often social engagements that are undertaken by a Mayor are an expression of giving cohesion to the life of the Town. The Mayor 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.

4. Ceremonial Role of the Mayor:

A significant part of the Mayor’s role is ceremonial. The following are examples of this:

- To be the representative for the Town Council, the community and local democracy and to work to ensure that the dignity and impartiality of the Office of Mayor is upheld.
- To host all 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 act as the Council’s ambassador in promoting the Town at all opportunities.
- To attend and 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.

5. Civic Precedent Within the County:

It is often when a Councillor thinks about taking on the role of Mayor 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.

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5.1. Lord Lieutenant:

Section 1 of the Lieutenancy Act 1997 requires the King 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 King 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/she is the Sovereign's representative in a county and consequently it is his/her 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 King
- Keeper Of The Rolls – Lord Lieutenant is the Chief Magistrate in the County

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

5.2. 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

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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/her County to the Lord Lieutenant, but gives precedence to the 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.

5.3. Chairman of Durham County Council:

The Chairman of Durham County Council takes precedence in the Durham County Council area over everyone, including Town Mayors, subject only to the Royal prerogative. However, at purely Town Council civic functions the Chairman surrenders his precedence to the Town Mayor.

5.4. The Mayor of Sedgefield:

The area over which the Mayor of Sedgefield presides is restricted to the area defined as the Parish of Sedgefield. The Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Mayor has precedence in his/her town, "but not so as to prejudicially affect His Majesty's Royal Prerogative". The Mayor enjoys precedence in his/her own area and not that of his/her neighbours. Therefore the Mayor should not accept an invitation to attend, in an official capacity, a function in another area without the express consent of the Mayor/Chair of that area. If consent to attend in another

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area is forthcoming, the Mayoral chains should not be worn unless approved by the Mayor of the area to be visited.

5.5 The Mayor's Consort:

There is no legal obligation to select a Mayor's Consort. The positions of "Mayor's Consort" is not recognised by statute. They are usually the partner of the Mayor, although he/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 Mayor to an engagement. The Mayor may ask another person to accompany him/her to the engagement, but it is expected that only the Mayoress/Consort shall wear the official Chain of Office. The role of the Consort is to support the Mayor during his/her year of Office. Although the role has no civic standing, the support given is invaluable to the Mayor and it is essential that the Mayor's Consort is as willing as the Mayor to fulfil the role. However, if the Mayor is unable to attend an event, another Town Councillor can be nominated to act as Deputy for that particular event to attend on the Mayor's behalf and not the Consort.

At some civic functions, protocol dictates that the Mayor's Consort does not have the prominence of the Mayor, but this should in no way detract from the role.

6. **Mayoral Etiquette (including wearing of chains):**

It is expected that where the Mayor attends a function and wears Chains of Office, day dress shall be worn. This shall also apply to their Consort.

Chains should be worn at all formal Mayoral events but NOT when:

- The Mayor is attending private functions or in a private capacity
- The Mayor is attending a function outside of the Town Council's area, unless he/she has the consent of the Mayor or Chairman of that local authority

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- The Mayor is visiting the Palace of Westminster, where it is deemed to be a Palace of the Sovereign

The Chains of both Mayor and Consort are 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.

When formally addressing the Mayor of Sedgefield they should be referred to as The Worshipful the Mayor of Sedgefield Councillor (name). In conversation, if a man, the Mayor should be called Mr Mayor and if a woman Madam Mayor.

7. Election of Mayor of Sedgefield:

The election of Mayor of Sedgefield takes place as a Standing Agenda item at the Town Council's Annual General Meeting held in May immediately following the election of Council Chair. The election will be decided by vote at the meeting with the choice of the majority of members present being appointed. It is desirable that the chosen candidate has experience of the Town Council, its work and the Town.

8. Getting Started as Mayor of Sedgefield:

It is strongly recommended that a new Mayor resists the urge to drastically change the role of Mayor before they know how it, and the Town Council, really works. Many of the Town's Mayoral traditions have evolved over the years. There are, however, a number of things a new Mayor must consider as he/she starts their term of Office:

- Choose a Consort
- Nominate a charity(ies)/organisation(s) for which to raise funds
- Consider when, where and whether to have a Civic Service
- Meet with Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary to agree working arrangements for the coming year and confirm dates of annual events

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- Meet with Projects & Media Co-ordinator to agree promotional work through Sedgefield Extra, Town Council website and Twitter

Being Mayor is a difficult role and is often intense. Each Mayor will undoubtedly have “done things their way” and the new Mayor will want to change things to suit him/her. This is not a criticism of the outgoing Mayor, but personal preference of the new incumbent.

9. Mayor’s Civic Staff:

9.1. Town Clerk:

The Office of Town Clerk is a very ancient one, with the earliest recorded in the Act of the Apostles Chapter 19 Verse 35. The Town Clerk is the principal permanent official and head of the paid service of the Council, referred to legally as the Proper Officer of the Council. The Town Clerk, due to other Council duties, plays a minor role in the day to day support of the Mayor, however, it is expected that the Town Clerk will accompany the Mayor on high civic occasions within the Parish such as Remembrance Sunday and Mayor’s Civic Ball. If the Mayor has an issue with any employee of the Town Council, he/she should raise the matter with the Town Clerk as head of paid service.

9.2. Administrative Assistant/Mayor’s Secretary:

Day to day administrative support for the Mayor is provided by the Council’s Administrative Assistant/Mayor’s Secretary who is employed on a part-time basis and does not normally work on a Wednesday. This Officer will deal with most correspondence addressed to the Mayor, which will be in the main invitations for the Mayor and Consort to attend various functions. The Mayor will inevitably receive some invitations etc direct, which should be passed to the Administrative Assistant/Mayor’s Secretary for attention. Whilst the Mayor will keep their own diary it is expected that if they are to be unavailable for a period of time they inform

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the Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary for courtesy. The Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary will collate invitations and communicate directly with the Mayor 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. The Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary in conjunction with the Mayor, and Town Clerk when necessary, will help to organise and co-ordinate those Mayoral events to which the Town Council has committed (see section 10).

10. Mayoral Events/Activities:

The Town Council has pledged to exclusively organise and deliver the following events on behalf of the Mayor during their term of office:

Mayor's Civic Service – this is usually held in St Edmund's Church in the form of a special Sunday morning service to which the Mayor can invite guests as they wish. The Mayor will deliver a reading at this Service. Basic refreshments are provided following such a service in the Church's welcome room. Some Mayors have requested, due to their own religious beliefs, for such a service to take place in one of the other places of worship in the Town. Similarly some Mayors have requested not to have a Civic Service. Such a service would be one of the first Mayoral events and will be discussed between the Mayor and Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary very soon after election to their role. This is not a mandatory role, i.e. a Mayor may choose not to have such a service.

Mayor's Charity Quiz – this is usually held on the last Friday night in October and takes place at Ceddesfeld Hall. This is a fun and informal event which includes a pie and pea supper and can also accommodate a fund raising raffle (or similar type event). This event has a maximum capacity of 70. Note: Any change to a weekend date would mean this becomes an event to be staffed by the Mayor, i.e. Town Council staff will not be in attendance.

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Mayor's Civic Carol Service – this service is held the first Thursday evening in December commencing at 7pm in St Edmund's Church. The Mayor will lead a procession of dignitaries as well as conduct a reading during the service. This service includes the combined choir of both local primary schools as well as being attended by numerous groups from the town and residents. Refreshments for invited guests are served in the Welcome Room at the Church following this event.

The Town Council delivers the following community events at which attendance by the Mayor of Sedgefield is expected:

Tub Planting – this takes place in June each year and is a fun way to get young children involved in planting tubs around the central village green area.

Remembrance Sunday Service- the Mayor leads the Town's remembrance activities including processing with dignitaries and reading during the Church service at St Edmund's Church but also laying a wreath at the Town's War Memorial.

Fireworks Display – the Mayor's judging skills are put to the test each year as they judge the Halloween Howler competition prior to the Town's annual Fireworks Display in the grounds of Ceddesfeld Hall.

Snow Party – the Mayor welcomes residents to the Turning Circle and announces the winner of the Christmas lights switch on at the culmination of the Council's Snow Party event which marks the start of the festive season.

The Mayor's events programme concludes with the Council's **Annual Town Meeting** in early May in the Parish Hall with the presentation of fund raising cheques to chosen charity(ies) and cause(s) followed immediately by participation in the awarding of the Citizen of the Year / Young Citizen of the Year Awards.

Please note that any other event(s) which the Mayor wishes to hold during their term of office they will have full responsibility for organising and delivering. Only limited administrative support, if possible depending upon other Council business operations, can be given by the Administrative Assistant/Mayor's Secretary. Any

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requests for such assistance need to be directed to the Town Clerk in the first instance for consideration. With the exception of those events which the Town Council has pledged to deliver, there is no expectation for Council staff to work at other Mayoral events as the focus for organising and delivering these will fall to the Mayor and Consort and their friends/volunteers to undertake the bulk of the work.

11. Financial Arrangements:

The Local Government Act 1972 provides that a “Council may pay the Mayor for the purpose of enabling them to meet the expenses of his/her Office such allowance as the Council think reasonable”.

Mayor’s Allowance:

A Chair’s Allowance of £1,100 is allocated each year by the Town Council and through the Council’s General Power of Competence this allowance is transferred at the Council’s AGM to the Mayor to assist them in performing their civic duties. The Mayor’s Allowance is expected to assist with the following kinds of costs:

- Tickets to fund raising events
- Raffle tickets
- Mayoral receptions
- Clothing
- Mileage/travelling

The Mayor’s Allowance is retained in-house by the Town Council and only to be used to reimburse expenses incurred by the Mayor of Sedgfield upon the production of receipts or to pay in full for events which the Mayor wishes to attend. If the Mayor does not wish to attend another Mayor’s event but still support this must be done by paying the full cost of a ticket(s) which will be administered via the Admin Assistant/Mayor’s Secretary.

Taxation:

Unlike the Members Allowance which is subject to tax and national insurance, the Mayor’s Allowance is held by the Town Council and is used as a contribution towards total expenses incurred rather than an emolument. Money is only paid out

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of the Allowance for the direct purchase of event tickets or to reimburse expenses upon the production of receipts or invoices.

Whilst accepting the difficulties of requiring receipts for every item of expenditure the Mayor is advised to keep some appropriate records of expenditure to meet any demands of public accountability should the HM Revenue & Customs challenge the basis of the allowance received. Should the allowance be subject to any HMRC inspection, it should be stressed that the Office of Mayor is not an “office of profit”; that is any money received does no more than cover the out of pocket expenses incurred through holding the Office. Please note it is not the responsibility of the Council’s Responsible Financial Officer to maintain such records. Once the Mayoral Allowance is paid to the Mayor, it is the Mayor’s responsibility to account for its expenditure and not the Council.

Mayor’s Charity Fund:

The Mayor can choose to raise money for an appointed charity(ies)/organisation(s) during their year in Office. This is not compulsory but is generally the case. It is expected that any funds raised shall benefit local people, therefore in the event that a national charity is chosen; there shall be a local branch. All money raised will be held by the Town Council in the Mayor of Sedgefield’s community bank account held by Barclays. This account, including all receipts and payments, is subjected to the same internal financial controls which are applied to all other accounts operated by the Town Council to ensure full transparency and accountability. At the end of each Mayoral year, the Mayor will decide how their generated funds are to be allocated and these are paid in the form of cheque issued at the conclusion of the Town Council’s Annual Town Meeting in May.

Allocation of Mayoral Fund:

Throughout the Mayor’s year of Office it is likely that requests for donations will be received from local community groups in Sedgefield. The Administrative Assistant/Mayor’s Secretary will collate such requests and in April will schedule a

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meeting with the Mayor for them to consider such requests. It is the Mayor's sole decision as to how the money they have raised through their events can be allocated. Please note that it is not permitted for any remaining Mayor's Allowance to be used to supplement funds raised.

12. Public Relations:

12.1 Reporting to Council:

The Mayor is asked to provide a report of their activities at each Town Council's Monthly Meeting during their term of Office. It is encouraged that such reports are written and given to the Clerk at least one week prior to the Monthly Meeting in order to be included in issued Committee packs. In some instances it is noted that Mayor's prefer to deliver verbal reports at Monthly Meetings. In addition, details of all Mayoral events are included on the monthly list of dates circulated to all Town Councillors as part of their Committee packs.

12.2. Communicating With The Public:

The Town Council operates a website which has a page dedicated to the Mayor. If the Mayor wishes to use this they need to prepare their own content and forward to the Projects & Media Co-ordinator. From this information will be disseminated through the Council's X account. The Sedgefield Extra is published four times per year with a copy delivered to each house in the Town and Mayoral events will be promoted and reported in this. Posters for events are displayed in the Town Council Offices and noticeboards as well as disseminated through the resident's database where relevant.

12.3. Relationship with the Press:

The press may ask the Mayor to comment on issues. The Mayor, as civic representative, should only speak about matters directly relating to their fund raising activities or events which they are attending. All other media requests should be forward to the Town Clerk, or in their absence the Chair of the Council.

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12.4. Public Meetings and Politics:

Once appointed, the Mayor is apolitical and should not get involved in controversial organisations. The Mayor, as Mayor, should not take part in a political conference, other than to officially open it, which is an acceptable Mayoral engagement. The Mayor is at liberty to chair any Public meeting, although it is advisable not to get embroiled in anything likely to be too controversial. The Mayor cannot grant permission for a Public Meeting to be held in the Parish Hall free of charge without first obtaining permission from the Town Clerk and, if appropriate, Sedgefield Town Council as owners of the building.

12.5. Christmas Cards:

Sedgefield Town Council does not provide the Mayor of Sedgefield with a formal Christmas card or official mailing list. Any individual when performing their role as Mayor can send Christmas cards if they so wish but this must be done on a personal basis and not in their capacity as Mayor of Sedgefield.

13. Being A Mayor 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 Mayor operates within the guidelines. It is worthy of note that unlike all Councillors who cease office four days after the election, the Mayor remains in Office until his/her successor is appointed at the Council's AGM.

14. Gifts To The Mayor:

Gifts are sometimes given to the Mayor 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 Mayor is usually when anything of great value or meaning to the town would be

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kept on display in the Town Council Offices, and anything of smaller value/edible/perishable/personal, then the Mayor would keep it. Mayoral gifts that are not deemed personal will be subject to the following policy and submitted for acceptance at the end of each 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 Mayor 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. This applies to the Mayor. Please refer to the Council's Gifts and Hospitality Policy for further advice.

15. End of Civic Year:

At the end of a civic year the Mayor will need to consider a number of matters:

- Thanks to office and support staff – they do work hard, often behind the scenes throughout the civic year
- Thanks to the Mayor's personal support staff – family, friends
- Thanks to Consort
- Thanks to Mayor's charity supporters
- Reacquainting with friends you've ignored all year
- Attending clubs and societies you've not been to all year
- Talking to your successor – personal views/advice are often welcomed

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- Book a holiday and put your feet up!

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