



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Submission for Civic Office of the Year

Introduction

Welcome to the Mayor's Office at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, we are a small team consisting of 2 (formerly 3) Officers:

- Katie Neve – Mayor's Secretary
- Caitlin Willmott – Executive Administration Assistant
- Jerry Edey – Former Mayor's Attendant

The team has undergone several changes over the last 12 months; Caitlin recently joined the team whilst Jerry retired during the summer leaving no full time driver and attendant to the Mayor and replaced by a bank of more general part-time drivers. However, in light of these changes, the team has bonded, adapted and made adjustments to responsibilities and working roles, whilst always striving to improve the forethought, planning and quality of support we give to both the Mayor and his Deputy.

The following extract summarises the general routines, focussed attention and planned support to the Mayor's Civic duties, and how it is felt this aids to a smooth and effective supporting service to the Mayor and building upon the Council's good reputation in the community.

Quality and Innovation

To the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells

Strong communication across all levels of the Borough Council and community as part of our in-depth planning and preparation is key to make sure the year's events run smoothly, with absolute clarity for all stakeholders. In Tunbridge Wells, we ensure the Mayor has the privilege of being Deputy Mayor the previous year; this enables us to ensure the Mayor is at least familiar with the role and it's accompanying responsibilities. It also allows us to build a strong and trusting relationship with the Mayor and the Mayoress as they ease into the role making sure they understand the requirements and duties. It is important to the team to ensure their minds are at ease in the knowledge that they have close support and that they can attend and carry out their duties to the public community with confidence.

Before the Mayoral 12 monthly term has started, we have an Induction Meeting; this meeting includes all relevant stakeholders, including the Mayor's Office, Chief Executive and Leader of the Council. During this planning the Mayor - Elect is encouraged to ensure he is absolutely clear about his role, responsibilities, routine and supporting team. It allows all stakeholders to understand any specific needs that maybe unique to the incoming Mayor where he or she can ask for any additional support or questions. It also allows all parties to get to know and understand each other, thus enabling a bond of trust, friendship and respect. Lastly, it allows all to be aware of any specific key events that require additional planning whilst highlighting the important features of the upcoming year.

Additionally, a carefully structured and updated guiding handbook is given to the Mayor - Elect; which provides all details of the planned events as well as a handy reminder of the supporting teams' general and individual roles, as well as any emergency contact details, events contacts and useful tips based on Events that have previously taken place.

This meticulous planning and preparation prior to and during the Mayoral Year crucially ensures any unexpected issues are kept to a minimum; although this is sometimes unavoidable. Another way we militate against such issues is through weekly diary meetings with the Mayor. In these meetings, we discuss recent event invitations, and run through impending events to ensure all potential issues, risks and worries are covered. This includes the events' finer details, such as dietary confirmation, event facilities, parking and speeches. Anything missed can be scooped up through further enquires and follow-on actions from these meetings.

To aid planning as best as possible, we encourage open and free dialogue from organisations who have invited the Mayor. This is reinforced through the completing of an Attendance Form, which clarifies all the essential information that is required for the Mayor to prepare for that event including time, date and location (in case the Mayor needs to drive) along with parking and duties required, but also to ensure the organisation gets the very most out of the visit themselves. From the Attendance Forms, diary sheets are created for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Mayor's driver which clearly displays all the necessary details for a successful visit. Lastly, this is emailed to all stakeholders and a hard copy is also given to the Mayor and driver. The team prides itself on modern ways of working and is quickly adapting to a paperless office, whilst currently realising the dynamics of this

Figure 1: An Example of the Attendance Form

supporting role lends itself to very light production of supporting documentation.

Clear and concise guidance on a daily basis is crucial to aid the busy and varied schedule of the Mayor; with several different events, personalities and people, needing to be accounted for, and it is difficult to remember every piece of protocol.

Katie, the Mayor's Secretary, has been working within the supporting office for over 30 years. This experience and knowledge has assisted many Mayors. Even though every Mayor is different, it is comforting to them to know that previous Mayors have been through the similar vigorous and demanding schedules with the reliable, knowledgeable and dedicated support of Katie. This year Jerry also provided a duty above and beyond the expected, often providing additional supporting advice and ideas during Mayoral diary meetings about journeys to events which helped Mayors in both their personal and professional circumstances. Jerry had worked in the Mayor's supporting team for almost 10 years prior to his retirement this year, and had provided an exemplary service given that the daily trials and tribulations bring a wide variance of unexpected challenges and opportunities.

To Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Within Tunbridge Wells, we want the Council Officers to feel that the Mayor is approachable and not a 'force to be reckoned with'. We organise a series of events for the Officers, including a 'Best Dressed



Figure 2: The Mayor with Best Dressed Office Winners

Festive Office' at Christmas, which the Mayor Judges, presenting a certificate and prize to the lucky winners. This event allows the staff to get to know the Mayor on a more 'personal' level, whilst enabling the Mayor to communicate and reinforce any messages of appreciation or constructive criticisms from the community. Additionally, the Mayor's team organises Long Service Awards for Officers who have been part of TWBC for over 5 years. These are always held in the Mayor's Parlour where the team ensure refreshments are arranged and

speeches prepared to ensure recognition of the huge contribution these Officers have made. Through these events, the Mayor always has complete familiarity with the Council's ambitions, plans and issues, whilst the Council's Officers are able to fully realise the value that the Mayor brings to all cultures, sectors, ages and businesses within the community. Indeed, through an in-depth understanding, the Mayor often invites appropriate Council Officers to events, where they can add significant value to the visit.

Many Mayoral events within the year are also promoted internally within the Council, by the Mayor's Office, which reinforces the union between Officers and Councillors. The Civic Office also plans, manages and provides staff support to the Annual Mayor's Bowls Match, drawing together Councillors, Officers and key members of the community for a charity bowls match, allowing all to mix and understand each other in an informal and fun environment.



Figure 3: The Mayor enjoying Bowls

Since 1989, Royal Tunbridge Wells has been twinned with Wiesbaden - a town



Figure 4: Tunbridge Wells Twinning & Friendship Association Crest

in West Germany. This sprang from friendship between former paratroopers from Wiesbaden and Tunbridge Wells wanting to form a bond in the 1960s. This bond is still going strong today with the Civic Office often organising the hosting of frequent work placement visits for students from Wiesbaden, including a visit to the Town Hall, Mayor's Parlour and Council Chamber. Detailed planning and communications go into organising these visits, ranging from the invitations to all the students, planning of organisation visits and arranging local families to host and care for the children. Importantly, this is a key event for both Towns and enforces the importance of 'Twinning' to the youth through mutual friendship, bonding and understanding.

To the Tunbridge Wells Community

From concerts, to school performances, to visits; the Mayor meets many children and each one gets a memento from their visit... A Mayor Bear. The Civic Office decided that the presentation of Mayor Bears would be a lovely addition to the Mayoralty portfolio of duties. Children have always admired and looked up to the Mayor as a figure of wisdom, experience and Authority, a force for good and the presentation of such a memento from the time they met the Mayor seems to work a treat, bringing positive memories to young, active and key members of our community as we look to an uncertain future. If the Mayor does not have enough, the supporting team goes 'on a bear hunt' to ensure no child is left out!



Figure 5: Our Fly the Flag Ceremony

At Tunbridge Wells, we commemorate the Commonwealth each year with the 'Fly the Flag' ceremony. The Civic Office organises several local primary school children to come in to the Town Hall to chat with and ask the Mayor questions about the Commonwealth, what it is, its history and its importance to our country as well as its contribution to harmony and mutual understanding between Nations. Children watch the hoisting of the Commonwealth flag, and absorb the importance and grandeur of the

occasion, whilst, of course, receiving a much sought after Mayor Bear! The Civic Office plans, manages and provides support to the Tunbridge Wells Model United Nations General Assembly. This is where students from local secondary schools come and discuss and learn about politics and have mock debates and whilst absorbing the Mayor's knowledge, also presents an opportunity for the Mayor and his team to learn some gems of knowledge and advice from untainted minds!

Since 1988, the Mayor's Toy Appeal has been a key central charity within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. The Civic Office has been the driving force behind this charity on behalf of the Mayor who appeals for members of the community to donate toys to disadvantaged and poverty stricken children for Christmas when they previously would have gone without. In 2017, the appeal attracted 1,800 donations helping 420 children have Christmas gifts and in 2018 the appeal attracted over 5,000 donations helping 525 children; allowing the children to have a Christmas with presents bringing unquantifiable benefit and happiness to such important members of our local community. The centre of the appeal is the Mayor's Office with the main distribution of leaflets and promotion coming from within the team who gather toys from the collection points and liaise with businesses, members of the community and organisations who wish

to be involved. It is the Office's most loved event as it has such a positive impact on the community.

Additionally, each Mayor is encouraged by the Civic Office to pick a local charity close to his or her heart, to support. This year the current Mayor chose Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource, and being the Mayor's chosen charity provides much more kudos and public recognition than would normally be received. This has run true with the 2017 charity, Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service, a domestic abuse charity which was little known before being chosen. The Civic Office always chooses local venues to host Mayoral events and promote the chosen charities. In doing so, the Office is keen to exploit any opportunity to promote the Borough as well as the Mayoralty. Every year, the Civic Office also organises the prestigious Civic Dinner and the Mayor's Charity Clay Shoot, two hugely supported events which help to bring together people, organisations and businesses from the wider area, providing a real sense of unity and community spirit across the Borough.



Figure 6: Thank You Poster from 2018's Mayor's Toy Appeal

Christmas is a special time in the Mayoral Office; the run up to Christmas is always the busiest and Christmas Cards are in full swing. The Office sources the Christmas card photos from local photographers or the public, this allows the Office and Mayoralty to send their messages of goodwill and season's greetings whilst utilising the efforts from within the community. This makes many people happy and, even in a paperless age, a Christmas card from the Mayor is always a special and unchangeable thing.

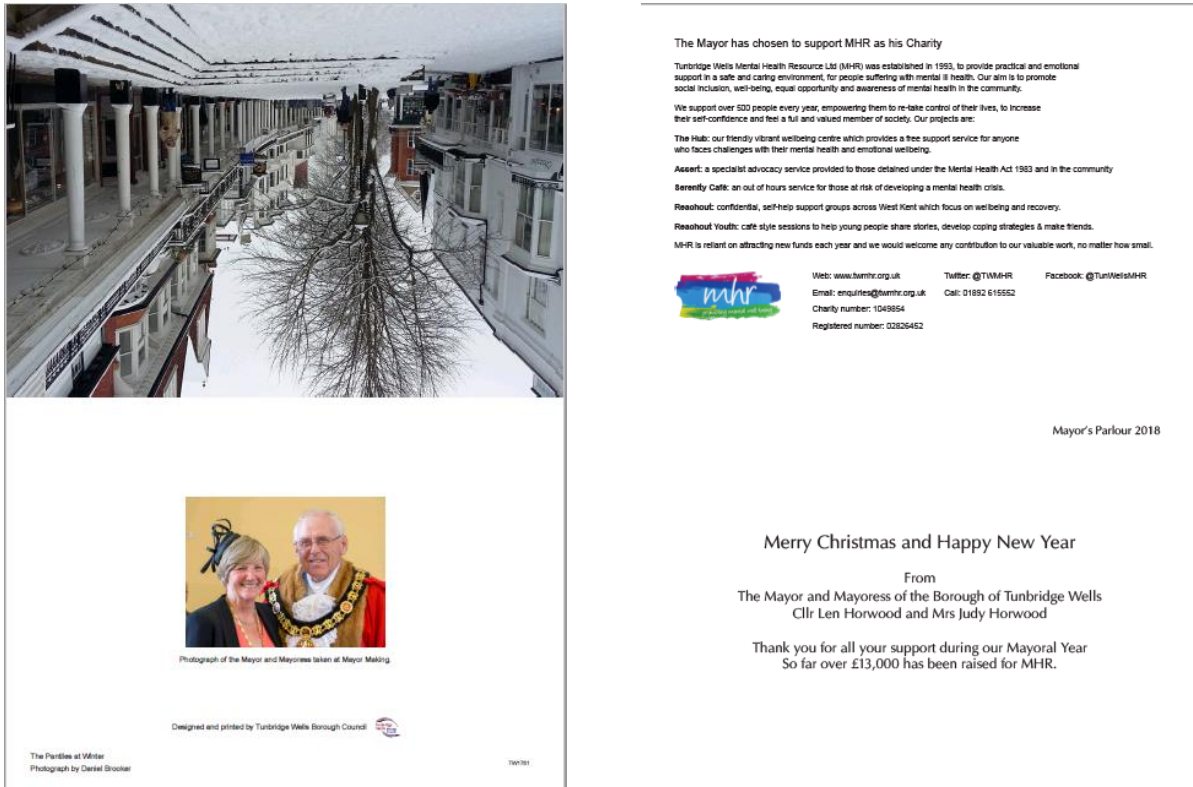


Figure 7: The Mayor's Christmas Card 2018

Promotion of the Mayor

The team will strive to promote the Office of the Mayor in a time where many believe it to be a dying role. As an Office, we think that the importance of the Mayoralty is one that needs to be shown throughout the Borough; we do this through talks and presentations. We like to invite schools from



Figure 8: Jerry presenting the Regalia to some young visitors

around the Borough to visit the Town Hall and Council Chamber. Regalia is one of the top topics with the Chains, Mace and Robes on display and their historical significance explained to all. As the Mace and Robes are only used for civic occasions, not many get to hear or understand this first hand, and many are genuinely enthralled by the historical significance, traditions and history of Royal Tunbridge Wells' most Senior Citizen.

Recently, the Mayor's Attendant gave a presentation to a group in the King Charles the Martyr Church (a Grade 1 listed building dating back to the 17th Century). The talk was regarded as one of the best

they had received, and they were thrilled to see the regalia first hand. This makes the Office proud to promote such an important figure in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Social Media has become a very big part of today's society; this is no different within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells. With Facebook and Twitter, the Mayor's Office keeps the Mayorality both relevant



and in the public eye of our 21st Century technology literate community. This allows those who might otherwise struggle to have any connectivity with the Mayor at least gain an understanding of his many roles, responsibilities and community service. It also allows those in the Borough to contact the Mayor's Office as it enables a quick and easy connection via a multitude of social media



sites. **If you would like to see or Social Media Pages; please click the images to either side.**

We like to promote the Mayor on the Council's Website, with an entire page dedicated to the Mayor with Regalia and Event information along with an updated weekly diary sheet so that the public are always well informed. It allows those who view the website easy access and simple links to what they want and keeping this updated is a priority to the Office and noted by all as an excellent tool of strategic communication.

The Mayoral Noticeboard is constantly updated and highlights and showcases many events to come



Figure 9: The Mayor's Noticeboard outside the Council Chamber

and those that have happened as well as providing links to Mayor's Social Media pages. The Civic Court is held in the Council Chamber every Tuesday; this involves many people coming in to the Town Hall exposing new people to the Mayorality and the Mayor's role. For each Full Council meeting, a poster is made by the Mayor's Office for the visiting members of public highlighting the importance of such Mayoral traditions and the importance of such an esteemed role within the Borough community.

To ensure a lasting memory of the Mayor after their term of office, the Office is undertaking some work using Geographical Information Systems (GIS), which allows users to upload images to promote historical visits and future events via a mapping process which shows where these all took place.

This year roughly 300 photos were uploaded onto our website and social media. The result is that members of the public, Councillors and Officers are able to look and see what duties previous Mayors have undertaken and achieved. **Please take a look via the link connected to this photo on the right.**

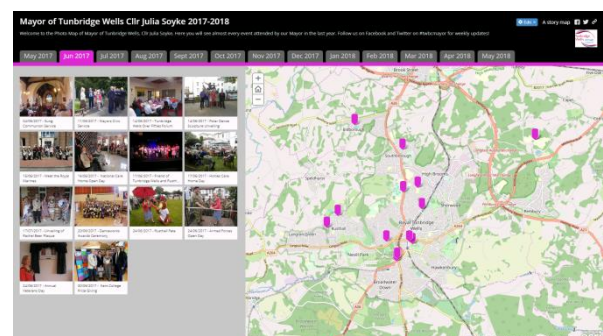


Figure 10: An Example of our GIS Map 2017-2018

Value

In recent times, the Mayor's Office budget has been significantly reduced and some of our events, such as the Civic Dinner, Quiz and Clay Shoot and Toy Appeal no longer have a budget. However, for each of these events, sponsorship is sought from local businesses and organisations using all channels of communication, marketing and social media. This sponsorship helps to promote local businesses but is also invaluable to the Office allowing it to be able to support the Mayor's intentions and aspirations. This is a particular achievement that the team is proud of using its limited knowledge of business acumen!

A great example of using sponsorship whilst saving money has been the Mayoral Car. The recent departure of a full time driver and attendant has thrown doubt on the future of having a car at all; and whilst this is still under scrutiny, the Mayor's Office has managed, in the short term, to keep this tradition through the use of casual drivers and a continuation of a sponsorship deal with the local Audi garage. Managing the use, maintenance and day to day running of this car and the casual drivers to be aligned with the needs of the Mayor falls to the Mayoral team. This involves a significant amount of time spent managing a very tight budget to run and



Figure 11: Mayor of 2017-2018 with Anton Du Beke with the Mayoral Car

maintain the car and an appropriate team of ready and willing casual drivers. The day to day planning of this can get quite complex and very time consuming, ensuring both car, keys, driver and Mayor are in the right place at the right time.

Of course, don't take our word for it...

"I am very pleased to support the Mayoral Team in Tunbridge Wells for this year's Civic Award.

Behind every successful Mayor is a hard working and dedicated team. In Tunbridge Wells we are very lucky to have such a team with Katie and Caitlin, who combine efficiency with humour and with tolerance for the different needs of a new Mayor every year.

This year they have seen their small team reduced with the retirement of the Mayor's Attendant, Jerry Edey. As Jerry was replaced with a team of four part time drivers this increased their workload with the need to coordinate this new team. They met the challenge with their usual good natured efficiency, and so far each appointed driver has arrived on time as expected.

Unfortunately I have suffered some health problems during my year, which for a while necessitated me using a wheelchair. Katie and Caitlin not only ensured I was able to get to all the events we had arranged to attend, but contacted each venue to confirm they were aware of my mobility problems and were able to accommodate my needs.



Among events they have organised for us was a very successful Afternoon Tea to mark the 100th anniversary of Universal Suffrage. They converted our Council Chamber into a Victorian Tearoom and organised for a local historian to speak about the Suffragette movement in Tunbridge Wells. They were also heavily involved in the planning of our Remembrance Day event, which in the year commemorating 100 years since the end of the Great War involved greater numbers of local organisations and Borough residents than for many years.

They are always happy to help in any way they can, and have gone out of their way to make our term of Office thoroughly enjoyable." - **Cllr Len Horwood, Mayor of Tunbridge Wells 2018 - 2019**

"It is my pleasure to work with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, especially with the staff of the Civic Office, as the assigned Deputy Lieutenant, a position I have held since 2005.

The team in the Civic Office have always given me and the Lieutenancy, their fulsome support to ensure numerous Civic Events over the past decade or so have been both successful and beneficial for the community.

My colleagues in the Kent Lieutenancy, who share a similar role to mine with the other twelve tier two local authorities in Kent, have often remarked at our annual planning and review meeting, how fortunate I am to be assisted so well by my Civic Team.

The bar set by my Civic Office is therefore a high one, unmatched across the rest of Kent. I consider myself most fortunate to be assisted so professionally here in Royal Tunbridge Wells."

- Mr Peter Blackwell DL, Deputy Lieutenant of Tunbridge Wells



Reflection

In summary, the Civic team that supports the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells has, with limited resources available, provided wide ranging, reliable and innovative support delivered with a passion and unwavering dedication despite hard times, a shrinking team and budgetary constraints. The Mayoral team understand the importance and significance of the Mayoral role and strive to spread their passion and knowledge of the Mayor throughout the Borough, particularly the young community. In doing so, the team has transformed the ways it works with modern times, and has recognised how better to promote and market the Mayor, whilst always ensuring attention to detail in the provision of an effective supporting service throughout a wide range and complexity of duties.



Figure 13: Caitlin with the Mayor in 2017's Best Dressed Office



Figure 12: Katie & Jerry on Jerry's last Mayor Making