

ROYAL VISITS

Introduction

1. This Legal Topic Note explains the formalities and rules of precedence associated with a visit to a town; parish or community by a member of the Royal Family or the Lord-Lieutenant.

Legislation

2. By virtue of section 3(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 'The chairman of a district council shall have precedence in the district, but not so as prejudicially to affect Her Majesty's royal prerogative'.

Royal Prerogative

3. Her Majesty the Queen has made known her wishes about precedence in connection with Royal visits by Her Majesty the Queen, and by those members of the Royal Family styled His or Her Highness and their spouses.
4. Except where a District matter is the purpose of a Royal visit to a county the order of presentation by the Lord-Lieutenant to the Royal visitor normally be:-
 - a. Lord-Lieutenant's spouse;
 - b. High Sheriff and spouse;
 - c. Chairman of County Council and spouse;
 - d. County Chief Executive and spouse;
 - e. Chairman of District Council and spouse;
 - f. District Chief Executive and spouse;
 - g. Member of Parliament and spouse;
 - h. Chief Constable and spouse; and
 - i. The Principal Organiser of the event.
5. Thereafter other necessary presentations may be deputed to the Principal Organiser.
6. Where a District matter is the purpose of the Royal visit, the Chairman of the District Council (or Mayor of the Borough) will take precedence over the Chairman of the County Council (s. 3(4) of the Act of 1972). Where there is doubt whether the visit is for a District matter organisers are expected to consult the Lord-Lieutenant.

Town, Parish and Community Councils – Visits

7. There is no provision in the formal order of precedence on Royal visits for the Town Mayor or Chairman of the Parish or Community Council. Where the visit has a particularly local character and is taking place in a Town, Parish or Community the Town Mayor or Chairman would normally be presented as a courtesy after the organiser of the event. In cases of difficulty, it should be possible for the Lord-Lieutenant to resolve the problem. Advice in advance can also be sought from the Private Secretary to the Member of the Royal family.

Events Not Involving Royal Family

8. The Lord-Lieutenant, if present, takes precedence as the representative of Her Majesty. The Mayor of the Borough or Chairman of the district council has precedence (next after the Lord-Lieutenant) in the borough or district over all other persons (s. 3(4) of the Act of 1972). This statutory right applies even at functions or meetings convened by a Town Mayor or Chairman of a Parish or Community Council. In his town or parish or community the Town Mayor or Chairman should have precedence after the Borough Mayor or District Chairman.
9. The question of precedence is a social, not an executive issue. Accordingly notwithstanding the rules of precedence, the person entitled to preside, or the person convening the meeting or event, whichever is appropriate, will preside. So at a Town Council dinner the Town Mayor presides even though the District Chairman is present.
10. The order of civic precedence after the local Mayor or Chairman is not pre-determined. So far as is necessary it should be arranged by the organiser of the event. Modelling the list so far as possible on that prescribed for Royal visits and differentiating between equals by reference to the date of first taking up the position currently held should normally provide a satisfactory answer. Where there are clear local customs these should be followed. For social precedence there is a clear and long list mainly based on titles or honours to be found in standard books of etiquette.

Insignia

11. Invitations to events should as a matter of courtesy indicate the style and dress and, in particular, invitations by Town Mayors or Chairmen to the heads of other local authorities should say whether civic insignia (such as a Mayoral chain) is to be worn. This is a matter for the convenor of the event. The organiser does not have to follow any direction or wish of the Mayor of the borough or Chairman of the district although normal civic courtesy would give weight to any request from him.

Titles

12. A Town Mayor should be described as 'The Town Mayor of ____'. A chairman of a parish or community council should be entitled 'The Chairman of the Parish (or Community) Council of ____'. A member of a town parish or community council should, if any title is used, be entitled 'Councillor (Miss or Mrs) ____'.

Forms of Address

13. In view of the need to distinguish between borough mayors and town mayors it is thought that the proper forms of address should be 'Mr (or Madam) Town Mayor', Mr (or Madam) Chairman, or 'Town Mayor'. Members of councils should be addressed as 'Councillor (Mrs or Miss) ____' where formality is required. A deputy should be addressed as 'Mr (or Madam) Deputy Town Mayor' not as 'Mr Deputy'.

Civic Services

14. There are no generally followed forms of church service for use on civic occasions. It is normal practice for the service to be settled by arrangement between the clergyman and the local authority.
15. Further information can be found in "Civic Ceremonial: A Handbook, History and Guide for Mayors, Councillors and Officers" by Paul Millward.

Other Legal Topic Notes (LTNs) relevant to this subject:

LTN	Title	Relevance
12	Honorary Titles and Officers of Dignity	Sets out the powers of councils to grant honorary freedoms.

© NALC 2013