

Chairman of Council - Protocol Guidance

The Chairman of West Berkshire Council is nominated and normally takes office in May, having often already undertaken a year as Vice-Chairman. The role of Chairman is a non-political role.

In order to avoid any embarrassment, a host may wish to recognise traditional protocol when extending an invitation to the Chairman of West Berkshire Council. These protocols cover such elements as meeting and greeting, speeches, seating and other areas where guidance may be helpful.

Forms of Address and seating

When greeting the Chairman on a formal occasion it is correct to address the Chairman as "Chairman" (even when a Chairman is female, they are still referred to as 'the Chairman') and his/her consort as Mr/Mrs xxx. 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 a table or in allocated seating (e.g. concert hall). The Chairman's Consort should be seated on the direct left of the host – unless other arrangements have been agreed.

Correspondence / Invites

When writing to the Chairman the letter should be addressed to 'The Chairman of West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD'. 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

When the Chairman attends a function it is usual for him/her to wear his/her Chain of Office. Permission will be sought if the event is outside the West Berkshire boundary.

Precedence

Within West Berkshire, the Chairman should take precedence over all other civic dignitaries unless the Lord-Lieutenant (or a Deputy) is representing The King, or there are 'special circumstances' which have been agreed beforehand. The Chairman's Office can advise any organiser on issues of precedence.

In an event, primarily organised by a District or Town Council within another District, the Chairman or Mayor of that locality is host and takes precedence. In any event, the district

Chairman takes precedence over all his guests, unless The King 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 for each to wear their Chain or Badge to the event.

Speeches

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 important that this is requested, with sufficient notice, via the Chairman's Office. It is not usually appropriate for the Chairman to contribute to the 'housekeeping' information (such as fire exits, etc.) for the event.

If there are speeches, the Chairman should be referred to first ("Chairman, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen" or if it is a welcome "I am delighted to welcome the Chairman of West Berkshire Council, Councillor xxx).

Where other 'civic' guests may be present, precedence decisions will have to be taken depending on the nature of the event and the location of the host building. 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.

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.

If you wish to discuss any issues regarding the Chairman of West Berkshire Council, please contact the Chairman's Office: Chairman@westberks.gov.uk
