

# The Charter Trustees of Bexhill

Borough of Bexhill 1902 - 1974



## CIVIC HANDBOOK

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been written as an introduction to the Civic life of Bexhill. Although principally for the guidance of newly-elected Mayors and Deputy Mayors, it is hoped that it will prove useful to those contemplating standing for the offices as well as to those officers playing a supporting role.

In acknowledging that most Mayors need some advice and guidance initially but very quickly develop their own individual style for the performance of their duties, it is also recognised that from being an "ordinary" Trustees, a newly elected Town Mayor is suddenly thrust into a world of formality with a whole new set of rules and guidelines to follow. They are then expected to meet, host and entertain a bewildering array of people, organisations etc. from all walks of life.

This book therefore attempts to strike the right balance by "de-mystifying" Civic Office and providing answers to those questions most frequently asked. If there are any matters which you would like expanded upon or clarified – or indeed any matters not covered by this book on which you would like advice – the Clerk to the Trustees will be pleased to assist.

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# Section 1

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## A POTTED HISTORY: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BEXHILL

A typhoid epidemic in Bexhill in 1880, which resulted in a number of deaths, marked the beginning of the end of a 50-year administration rule by the Battle Union, whose failure to provide for the growing needs of Bexhill led to the Town obtaining its own Local Board of Health in 1884. The Local Government Board Inspector, at an Inquiry held at the Bell Hotel assembly room in March of that year, concluded "I am of the opinion that Bexhill will in all probability grow very rapidly and it is desirable that the parish should be constituted a local government district without delay".

### **THE LOCAL BOARD OF BEXHILL 1884 - 1895**

On 7th May 1884, the date which marks the beginning of modern local government in Bexhill, a Local Board of Health was constituted by an Order of the Local Government Board and the first Board of nine members was elected in July. They decided on the official name of "The Local Board of Bexhill" and this was sanctioned under the seal of the Local Government Board on 28th July 1884.

The Local Board chose as its chairman Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane, the first resident justice of the peace, who presided throughout the ten years of the Local Board and then became chairman of the Urban Council which succeeded it in January 1895.

The Local Board was a sanitary and highways authority and as the most urgent need in the growing town was for proper sanitation, the first loan raised by the Board, of £6,534, was for a main drainage system which extended from Sidley through the Old Town, Belle Hill and the London Road area (which was the first shopping centre of the new Bexhill). It was then, by agreement with the 7th Earl De La Warr, linked with the drainage system being constructed on the new De La Warr Estate on the eastern side of the town, and discharged into the outfall at Galley Hill. The work was completed in 1886.

In obtaining highways powers, Bexhill ceased to be dependent on the Hastings Highways Board. The new Local Board's first rate of one shilling in the £ was levied chiefly to pay for road improvements, the original parish roads being largely made up of beach and which became mud tracks in winter.

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## **THE URBAN COUNCIL OF BEXHILL 1895 - 1902**

The Local Government Act of 1894 decreed that urban sanitary authorities should be called urban district councils, and Bexhill's first Urban Council of 15 members, with Colonel Lane continuing as Chairman, was elected in January 1895. In April that same year Colonel Lane died. His memorial stands in Town Hall Square.

Major events over the Urban Council's eight years' existence included the establishment of the local electricity undertaking; the lease and subsequent purchase of Egerton Park; the acquisition of part of the seafront belonging to the De La Warr estate, the management of the Down, and the ceremonial opening of the Town Hall for which the site had been purchased by the Local Board in 1893.

## **THE BEXHILL BOROUGH CORPORATION 1902 - 1974**

In April 1899 a public meeting unanimously carried a resolution 'that in the opinion of this meeting the time has arrived for the inauguration of a movement with the object of obtaining a charter of incorporation for the town of Bexhill'.

By 1902 a draft charter had been drawn up and approved and on 7 April that year Bexhill's Charter of Incorporation was signed by King Edward VII. The Urban Council continued in office until 1st November 1902, when the first elections were held for the five wards into which the new borough was divided. (Municipal elections were held annually on 1st November until the change to May was made under the Representation of the People Act 1948 and became effective the next year).

The Borough Council consisted of six aldermen and 18 councillors, the Central ward returning six councillors until three members were allotted to a new Sidley ward in 1950.

On 9th November 1902 Bexhill elected its first Mayor, Mr. Ebenezer Howard, the owner of the Birchington Estate. His mayoralty, and subsequently those of the 8th and 9th Earls Brassey, were notable in that the holders were not members of the Council at the time of their election. Other notable successors to the civic chair included W.H. Mullens (the only mayor of the borough to have been High Sheriff of Sussex), and Mrs. C.I. Meads, a distinguished figure in the public life of East Sussex for half a century and the first woman to become Bexhill's Borough Mayor. The mayoralty of Earl De La Warr in 1935 was marked by the private visit of King George V and Queen Mary to the Cooden Beach Hotel (then owned by the De La Warr family) and the King inspected the De La Warr Pavilion then being built.

# Section 1

## THE BOROUGH ARMS



The Arms of the Corporation of Bexhill were granted by the Herald's College in 1907

### Heraldic Description

'Ermine a cross double parted and fretted Gules between, in the first quarter mitre, and in the second a demi-lion passant guardant conjoined to the demi-hulk of a ship both Or, in the third an estoile sable, and in the fourth a mallard proper, on a chief argent above waves of the sea, a demi-sun in splendour issuant from the upper part of the centre of the chief also proper, all within a border azure charged with eight martlets of the third, and for a crest on a wreath of the colours on a mound of sand a martello tower proper'.

### Notes on the Borough Arms

1. The Martlets and border are taken from the Arms of the County of East Sussex.
2. The Mitre is that of the See of Chichester which, for a long period, held ownership of the Manor of Bexhill.
3. The estoile sable is the crest of the Sackville Family.
4. The Demi-Lion and the Demi-Hulk of a Ship are representative of the Cinque Ports.
5. The Mallard is representative of the Brassey Family.

To preserve the mayoralty of former Boroughs such as Bexhill, where no successor parish council for the town had been retained, the Government introduced the Charter Trustee Order 1974 by virtue of which the 22 Bexhill councillors serving the new Rother District Council constituted The Charter Trustees of Bexhill. This Order empowered them, inter alia, "to make appointments to any offices of dignity already existing before 1st April 1974".

20 years later it looked as though this link with Bexhill's former Borough status might finally be severed when the Local Government Commission for England, charged with the responsibility for re-organising local authorities into larger, unitary authorities, recommended that Rother, Hastings and North Wealden become one.

In the event the recommendation was not upheld and the status of both Rother District Council and the Charter Trustees of Bexhill was retained.

# Section 1

## A POTTED HISTORY : BEXHILL TOWN HALL

### THE LAND AND BUILDING OF THE TOWN HALL

The land on which the Town Hall stands was purchased from the De La Warr Estate in 1893 for £580. Mr. Henry Ward from Hastings was appointed the architect, and a Mr. Charles Thomas of Western Road won the tender to construct the building for a sum of £3,044, provided he would "*execute cornices and dressings in stone instead of cement*" for an additional £226. Altogether, with equipment and furnishings, the building cost £5,250. In May 1894 the Council accepted the triangular plot of land which now comprises Town Hall Square as a gift from the De La Warr Estate.

### OPENING OF TOWN HALL

The Town Hall was opened on 27 April 1895 by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Joseph Renals. After a luncheon at the Sackville Hotel for 200 guests there was a grand procession led by the Town Band to the Town Hall which included 33 carriages and a four-in-hand coach plus a yoke of oxen – which was indicative of the important role agriculture still played in the industry of the Town. The opening ceremony was performed in the Town Hall forecourt on a raised platform. After the official speeches Mr. Walter Smith, who was the only remaining original Board Member, presented the Lord Mayor with a silver key with which to open the building.

### COMMEMORATIVE TABLET

In July 1895 a bronze commemorative tablet recording the opening of the Town Hall was unveiled by Lord Cantelupe and can be found just inside the entrance. The design was the work of Mr. A. Young, son of Mr. Henry Young, Chairman of the Town Hall Building Committee. The symbolical figures on either side of the tablet represent Justice and Peace.

### TOWN HALL EXTENSION AND NEW COUNCIL CHAMBER

Thirteen years later he designed the foundation stone and its ornamental surround for the Town Hall extension, as well as the two stained glass windows in the Council Chamber, one depicting the Arms of the Borough with its motto "Sol et Salubritas" (Sun and Health), the other of Queen Elizabeth I who was related to the Sackville family, the latter's inheritance of the Buckhurst and Bexhill Estates being passed to the De La Warr family in 1813 by the marriage of Lady Elizabeth Sackville and the 5th Earl De La Warr.

### THE PRESENT COMMITTEE ROOM

Until the extension was built the Council met in what is now known as the Committee Room, the features of which are two elegantly carved Bath stone chimney pieces. At the east end of the room, the chimney bears the arms of the De La Warr family and at the other end, the arms of the Bishop of Chichester. The massive carved chair used by the Chairman, now situated in the Council Chamber, was presented by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Lane and bears his coat of arms on the high back.

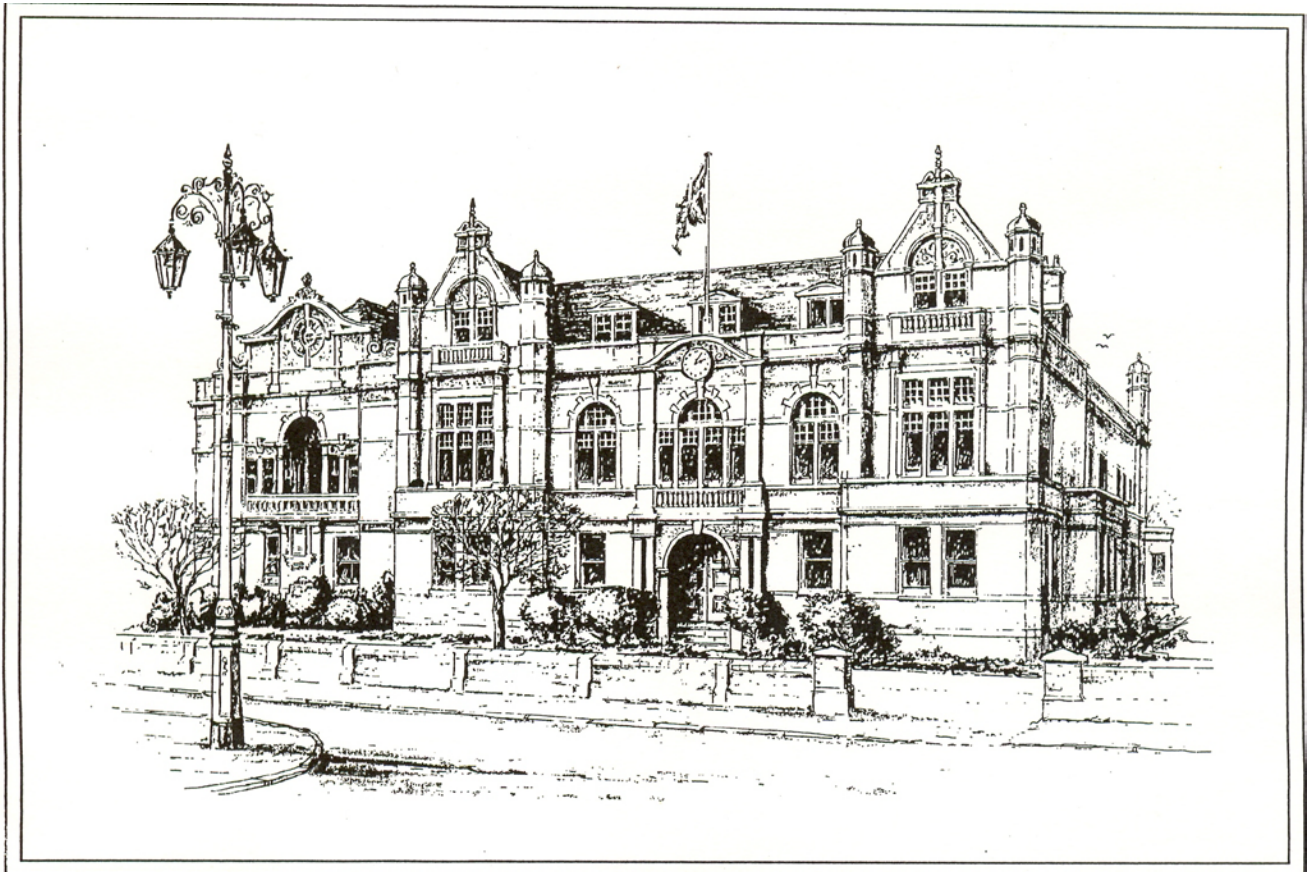


# Section 1

## A POTTED HISTORY : BEXHILL TOWN HALL

### BEXHILL TOWN HALL

Opened by The Lord Mayor of London  
Sir Joseph Renals  
on 27th April 1895





# Section 1

## A POTTED HISTORY : BEXHILL MAYORS

### Bexhill Borough Corporation – Borough Mayors 1902-1974

1902-3	Ebenezer Howard	1936-42	William Nicholson Cuthbert, JP
1903-5	Gilbert George Reginald, Earl De La Warr	1942-43	Frederick Foster Wimshurst
1905-6	Daniel Mayer	1943-44	William Howard Hughes
1906-7	James Mackey Glover	1944-46	Ernest William Bowrey
1907-8	Thomas Baron Brassey	1946-47	Samuel John Taylor
1908-9	Hon. Thomas Allnut Brassey	1947-48	William Howard Hughes
1909-11	John Alexander Paton	1948-49	William Howard Hughes
1911-14	Daniel Mayer	1949-51	Claude Pycroft
1914-16	Frank Bond	1951-53	Gilbert Harry Goodwin
1916-18	Joseph Barker Wall	1953-54	Granville Boyle Coghlan
1918-20	George Herbert Gray	1954-56	Joyce Oliver Alexander
1920-21	James Gibb	1956-58	Edgar Carter
1921-22	Arthur George Wells	1960-61	Reginald Frank Botting
1922-23	Ronald Gibb, CBE	1961-62	Frank Ernest Cooper
1923-24	Ernest William Bowrey	1962-63	Joyce Oliver Alexander
1924-25	Richard Cecil Sewell	1963-64	Eric Henry Corke
1925-26	Frank Bausor Bending	1964-65	Allan Sidley John Stevens
1926-27	Sir Ernest Birch, KCMG	1965-66	Ernest Thomas Robinson
1927-28	William Herbert Mullens, DL,JP	1966-67	Margaret Ethel Ackland
1928-30	Alexander Turner Laing	1967-68	John Baker
1930-32	Christina Isabella Meads	1968-69	Eric Trehearne Johnson
1932-35	Herbrand Edward Dundonald Brassey Sackville, Earl de la Warr	1969-70	William Arthur Sole
1935-36	Oscar Striediger, CBE, DSO	1970-71	Donald Ashley Kimber
		1971-73	William George Sanson
		1973-74	Harold George Morgan

# Section 1

## The Charter Trustees of Bexhill – Town Mayors 1974-2017

1974-75	Councillor E Haynes	1995-96	Councillor M J Kenward
1976-76	Councillor Mrs E Kimber	1996-97	Councillor Mrs P Bullock
1976-77	Councillor C C Carpenter	1997-98	Councillor W H Clements
1977-78	Councillor I A Brampton	1998-99	Councillor Mrs V M Higgins
1978-79	Councillor E Waite	1999-2000	Councillor Mrs H R Bridger
1979-80	Councillor Mrs L Kimber	2000-2001	Councillor C A Clark
1980-81	Councillor L Wells	2001-2002	Councillor Mrs J P Gadd
1981-82	Councillor Mrs E E Armstrong	2002-2003	Councillor P Fairhurst
1982-83	Councillor Mrs P L Phillips	2003-2004	Councillor Mrs D Williams
1983-84	Councillor C C Carpenter	2004-2005	Councillor S Earl
1984-85	Councillor A S J Stevens	2005-2006	Councillor Mrs Joy Hughes
1985-86	Councillor E J L Nicols	2006-2007	Councillor E A P Armstrong
1986-87	Councillor L A W Rashbrook	2007-2008	Councillor P G Lendon
1987-88	Councillor C Butchers	2008-2009	Councillor P R Douart
1988-89	Councillor Mrs M D Traice	2009-2010	Councillor Mrs B George
1989-90	Councillor M Bell	2010-2011	Councillor James Carroll
1990-91	Councillor D G Houghton	2011-2012	Councillor Stuart Wood
1991-92	Councillor Mrs J M Wicks	2012-2013	Councillor Mrs J P Gadd
1992-93	Councillor Mrs E F R Baker	2013-2014	Councillor Mrs F Winterborn
1993-94	Councillor B Kentfield	2014-2015	Councillor Brian Kentfield
1994-95	Councillor J McEwan	2015-2016	Councillor Maurice Watson
		2016-2017	Councillor Simon Elford



# Section 2

## THE CHARTER TRUSTEES OF BEXHILL : THE LEGAL POSITION

### THE CHARTER TRUSTEES OF BEXHILL

Bexhill was established as a Charter Trustee town on 1 April 1974 under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

### PRESERVATION OF THE MAYORALTY

The Act was made to enable the mayoralty to be preserved in cases where the town's borough status had been lost through the creation of the new district councils and where no successor parish council for that town had been retained.

### WHO WILL SERVE AS CHARTER TRUSTEES?

Under the provisions of the Act the District Councillors representing the area of the former Borough of Bexhill will constitute the corporate body "The Charter Trustees of Bexhill". They will be entitled in every year to elect one of their number to act as "Town Mayor", and to make appointments to any offices of dignity already existing before 1 April 1974.

### DO THEY HAVE ANY POWERS?

The Charter Trustees will not have any powers to provide service but they will be entitled to own certain types of property and precept through the district council on ratepayers for any expenses not otherwise covered.

### WHAT DO THEY DO?

Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Authorities (England)(Property etc) Order 1973 and the Charter Trustees Order 1974 the functions of Charter Trustees are:

- to elect a Town Mayor and a Deputy Mayor
- to make appointments to offices of dignity
- to hold historic and ceremonial property (other than land or building) transferred to them under article 7 and schedule 1 to the Transfer of Property Order and, in particular, charters, insignia and plate of the Borough of Bexhill

## Section 2

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- the acceptance of gifts of property of the same character as above, and also the power to purchase property of this description
- ancillary powers related to the office of mayor and appropriate ceremonial connected with it (including the use of accommodation) which must be provided by Rother District Council); and with the maintenance, insurance, display etc of property acquired as indicated above.

### **WHO PAYS FOR CHARTER TRUSTEES?**

Any sums needing to be raised by way of a rate to meet the expenses of Charter Trustees of Bexhill will be levied only within the area of the former Bexhill Borough. Any surplus of income over expenditure must be paid to the District Council and applied for the relief of rates – again within the area of the former Bexhill Borough.

### **FINANCIAL RECORDS**

The provisions of the Act dealing with accounts and audit, and the inspection of documents, are applied to Charter Trustees.

### **DISSOLUTION (OR PART) OF CHARTER TRUSTEES**

If a charter is granted to the Council of a District, any Charter Trustees constituted for an area comprised in that district shall be dissolved.

If an area or part of an area for which Charter Trustees have been constituted under the Act becomes, or becomes comprised in, a parish, or a separate community council is established for a community consisting of such an area, that subsection shall cease to apply to the area or part and accordingly the Charter Trustees shall cease to act therefor.

## Section 3

### **ORDINARY MEETINGS**

The Charter Trustees meet in May (Annual Meeting, June, October and March). The Quorum for a meeting is 6 Trustees. The meetings are held in Bexhill Town Hall at 5.30 p.m. on a Wednesday (except Annual at 6.30 pm).

Trustees will receive at least 7 days' notice of a Meeting and, without prejudice to the Mayor's prerogative to accept late items, are required to give at least 21 days' notice to the Clerk of items for inclusion in the Agenda.

The financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March and the audited accounts, together with the estimate of expenses and issue of a precept upon Rother District Council for the following year, are usually submitted for the Trustees' approval to the August meeting.

### **ANNUAL MEETING & MAYORMAKING CEREMONY**

Except during a District Elections year the nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor are made at the March meeting of the Charter Trustees. During an elections year the nominations are made and details for the Order Paper agreed at an informal meeting as soon after the elections as possible. Either way, the procedure is of course without prejudice to the statutory election required at the Annual Meeting.

By virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Charter Trustees Order, the current Mayor shall continue in office until the Annual meeting even if not re-elected as a Councillor at the District Elections.

The Annual Meeting and Mayormaking Ceremony has always been scheduled for the Wednesday following the Annual Meeting of Rother District Council which is held on a Monday in May.

The event is funded by the Charter Trustees and organised by the Clerk to the Trustees

The seating capacity of the Chamber and standing capacity of the Committee Room for refreshments, coupled with the factors of finance and fire regulations, limits the number that can be invited to 60. It would be appreciated, therefore, if this and the following details of who needs to be invited could be borne in mind.

Protocol and tradition require that a typical guest list should include the partners of the Trustees, past Bexhill Mayors and Mayoresses, the Chairman of Rother District Council, the Borough Mayor of Hastings and the Town Mayors of Winchelsea, Battle and Rye. In addition, the incoming Mayor is allocated 6 seats for personal guests and the incoming Deputy-Mayor, 2 seats.

# Section 3

## A TYPICAL ORDER PAPER FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING

1. The Town Mayor, (name), to take the Chair.
2. Prayers led by (the Mayor's Chaplain)
3. Apologies for absence
4. The Town Mayor to present a cheque to his/her Charity, (name)
5. The Town Mayor to announce the next item of business to be the election of Town Mayor for the ensuing year, and ask for nominations.
6. Councillor (name) to nominate Councillor (name).
7. Councillor (name) to second the nomination
8. The Town Mayor to ask if there are any other nominations
9. If there are no other nominations, the Town Mayor to put the name of ..... to the meeting and declare him/her elected Town Mayor for the ensuing year.
10. The newly elected Town Mayor, together with the Retiring Town Mayor, the Secretary, Treasurer and Mace Bearer, to retire to the Chairman's Room for robing
11. On returning to the Council Chamber, the Town Mayor to take the Chair and the Retiring Mayor to take the seat reserved for (him/her).
12. The Town Mayor to read and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and to thank the Charter Trustees for (his/her election).
13. The Town Mayor to ask for nominations for the office of Deputy Town Mayor
14. Councillor (name) to nominate Councillor (name)
15. Councillor (name) to second the nomination
16. The Town Mayor to ask if there are any other nominations
17. If there are no other nominations, the Town Mayor to put the name of Councillor (name) to the Meeting and to declare (him/her elected Deputy Mayor for the ensuing year
18. The Deputy Mayor to robe and take the seat on the left of the Town Mayor and to read and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thank the Charter Trustees for (his/her election
19. Councillor (name) to move the following vote of thanks to the retiring Town Mayor for past services:  
*"That the Charter Trustees record their appreciation of the services rendered to the Town of Bexhill by (name) during (his/her) period of office as Town Mayor, and tender to (him/her) sincere thanks for the keen interest (he/she) has always shown in the welfare of the Town"*
20. Councillor (name) to second the vote of thanks
21. The Town Mayor to put the motion to the meeting and to subsequently declare it carried
22. The retiring Town Mayor to reply to the vote of thanks
23. Presentation of bouquet to the retiring Mayoress
24. Town Mayor to move that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Charter Trustees held on..... be signed as a correct record
25. To receive the Town Mayor's communications
26. To agree the date of the next meeting
27. The Town Mayor to close the meeting and invite those present to join (him/her) for refreshments

# Section 4

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Bexhill Charter Trustees engage on a part-time arrangement, as the Clerk to the Trustees. He employs, again on a part-time basis, other staff to provide support to the Trustees.

### CLERK TO THE TRUSTEES

The Clerk will meet with the Mayor and Trustees as and when required to ensure that you are kept fully briefed on major matters affecting the Trustees. In addition, he will be pleased to assist if there are any matters of concern you or any aspect of civic life on which you would like further advice as the occasion arises.

In addition, the Clerk will deal with all correspondence and invitations to the Mayor, advise on protocol and precedence, organise the Civic Service, and assist with the administration of the Charter Trustees corporate body. If you propose to undertake any Civic projects, it will be necessary to engage the assistance of an external working party. Invitations received directly by the Mayor should be passed to the Clerk before being accepted.

### MACEBEARER

The Macebearer is responsible for leading the Charter Trustees on official ceremonial duties and is responsible for the safe keeping of the Mayoral Chains and Badges.

All communications concerning his services should be directed through The Clerk.

### THE MAYOR'S CHAPLAIN

The duties of the Chaplain (chosen by the Mayor) are to give spiritual guidance to the Mayor and to assist generally where the service of a Chaplain is required eg. leading the prayers at Charter Trustee meetings and officiating at Civic church services. The post is an honorary and unpaid one.