

# Community and Engagement Committee

13<sup>th</sup> December 2023



## Town Crier for Rugeley

### A History of the Town Crier

#### **“Oyez, oyez, oyez!”**

This is the call or cry of the town crier, now usually only heard at ceremonials, fetes and local events. It would however have been a common cry on the streets of medieval England.

‘Oyez’ (pronounced ‘oh yay’) comes from the French *ouïr* (‘to listen’) and means “Hear ye”. The town crier would begin his cry with these words, accompanied by the ringing of a large hand bell to attract attention. It was the job of the crier or bellman to inform the townspeople of the latest news, proclamations, bylaws and any other important information, as at this time most folk were illiterate and could not read. The cry would then end with the words, ‘*God save the King*’ or ‘*God save the Queen*’.

Having read out his message, the town crier would then attach it to the door post of the local inn, so ‘posting a notice’, the reason why newspapers are often called ‘The Post’.

Proclaiming the news was not however their only role: indeed, their original role was to patrol the streets after dark, acting as peace keepers, arresting miscreants and taking them to the stocks for punishment and posting their crimes to show why they were there. It was also his job to make sure fires were damped down for the night after the curfew bell.

It was also the role of the town crier at public hangings to read out why the person was being hanged, and then to help cut him or her down.

The key requirements of the role were the ability to read, a loud voice and an air of authority. Bellmen would be paid for each proclamation they made: in the 18th century the rate was between 2d and 4d per cry.

Town criers were protected by law. Anything they did was done in the name of the monarch, therefore to harm a town crier was an act of treason. This was a necessary safeguard as the town criers often had to announce unwelcome news such as tax increases!

The town crier or bellman can be traced back at least to medieval times: two bellmen appear in the Bayeux Tapestry, which depicts the invasion of England by William of Normandy and the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Today's town criers are dressed to impress in a red and gold coat, breeches, boots and a tricorne hat, a tradition that dates back to the 18th century. You can find them at local fetes, events and at town crier competitions.

Chester is the only place in Britain where you can hear the town crier regularly. You will find the crier at High Cross at midday (11am on race days) every Tuesday to Saturday between June and August. Proclamations have been read at the High Cross in Chester since the Middle Ages.

### **Fun fact**

*Did you know, when a group of town criers get together, for example for a competition, it is known as a 'a bellow of criers'?*

### **Introduction**

Different councils have very differing policies with regards to their town criers. Some are limited to events within the particular town in questions, whilst others allow the town crier to go to other areas, generally with the agreement of the council. These out of area events can potentially raise money for the council/individual.

### **Councillors need to consider the following:-**

- **Role of town council in approving bookings, or will the crier be totally autonomous**
- **Area allowed to operate within**
- **Formal agreement between the Town Council and Town Crier**
- **Will commercial activities be allowed, if so, who books, what charges, what happens to the proceeds**
- **Will the appointment be permanent, temporary, voluntary etc.**

I have looked at a number of councils who have a town crier and summarised their arrangements below.

1. **Leek Town Council** – very limited use within Leek Town. No mention of any other events and charges that would be made. No agreement with Town Council staff as to what events are undertaken.
2. **Macclesfield Town Council** – a formal agreement with the Town Crier, including reference to commercial activities and approval of the Town Clerk for bookings
3. **Blandford Forum Town Council** – a very informal arrangement with attendance within the town. No reference to commercial activities
4. **Skegness Town Council** – a formal agreement with the town crier, but no reference to commercial activities

5. **Bexhill Town Council** - formal agreement requirement town council agreements and reference to commercial activity, but no reference to the charges or what happens to the monies.
  
6. **Alton Town Council** - as part of its ongoing commitment to tourism and promotion in the town, decided that Alton's historic market town image would be enhanced significantly by the appointment of a Town Crier. In 2003 Alton's very first Town Crier was appointed. The Town Crier's main activities are to promote Town Council events and civic occasions. He is also available to help promote other groups' activities and events.. First council to actually state charge and what happens to the proceeds

Sources:-

Historic UK	<a href="https://www.historic-uk.com">https://www.historic-uk.com</a>
Leek Town Council	<a href="http://www.leektowncouncil.gov.uk">www.leektowncouncil.gov.uk</a>
Macclesfield Town Council	<a href="http://www.macclesfield-tc.gov.uk">www.macclesfield-tc.gov.uk</a>
Blandford Forum Town Council	<a href="http://Blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk">Blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk</a>
Skegness Town Council	<a href="http://www://skegness.gov.uk">www://skegness.gov.uk</a>
Bexhill Town Council	<a href="https://www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk">https://www.bexhilltowncouncil.gov.uk</a>
Alton Town Council	<a href="http://www.alton.gov.uk">www.alton.gov.uk</a>

Sue Buxton  
Town Clerk

## **Leek Town Council**

Leek Town has created the honorary role of Town Crier. This is a voluntary appointment to act as a support to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and any designated person who is representing the Town Council.

Acting in the capacity as the town's ambassador, the Town Crier can attend all appropriate civic and non-civic events, according to availability and his/her discretion.

Although self-funding in principle, a small payment is made to cover uniform maintenance and nominal travelling expenses.

As a general rule, the Town Crier only attends official meetings at the specific request of the Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor or the Town Clerk

## Macclesfield Town Council

### VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT - TOWN CRIER

The following information provides an agreement between the Town Crier (a voluntary post as part of Macclesfield Town Council) and Macclesfield Town Council. This agreement is not a contract of employment, is binding in honour only and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. That this agreement sits in parallel and is considered alongside the Terms of reference for the post (attached).

#### 1. Definitions and objectives:

- 1.1 It is in discussion that Macclesfield Town Council agreed to reinstate the role of Town Crier, bringing back a tradition of making public announcements.
- 1.2 The Town Crier role is a voluntary position undertaken by choice and is unpaid and the Town Crier is not invited to carry out work to replace paid staff.

#### 2. Rights and responsibilities of volunteers:

- 2.1 The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring that the Town Crier is clear about his/her rights and responsibilities and that the relationship between paid staff and the Town Crier is mutually supportive.
- 2.2 Macclesfield Town Council recognises that the Town crier will have the right to:
  - Know what is expected of him/her
  - Understand and agree to the description of the role of Town Crier
  - Be shown appreciation for the work they do
  - Work in a safe and risk free environment in line with Health and Safety requirements
  - Be free from discrimination, in line with the council's Equality and Diversity Policy
  - **Be covered** under the Council's insurance policy whilst undertaking duties on behalf of the Council.
  - Where possible be consulted on decisions that will affect the work they are doing
  - Ask for a reference

#### 3. Expectations of Macclesfield Town Council:

- 3.1 The Town Crier represents the Macclesfield and its residents as is expected to maintain a high standard of appropriate behaviour and courtesy at all times.

3.2 Macclesfield Town Council expects the Town Crier will:

- Carry out the duties in a way that honours the traditions and heritage of Town Crier role.
- Ensure that the cries carried out are in good taste and in the spirit of the role.
- Be reliable
- Be honest
- Treat all people equally
- Attend training sessions as and when agreed
- Meet time and duty commitments
- Respect Confidentiality

3.3 The Council has the right to **cancel this agreement** if the Town Crier fails to live up to the expectations outlined in 3.2 above or brings the Macclesfield / Council into disrepute.

#### 4. **Town Crier Role**

##### 4.1 **Purpose of Role**

To carry out the duties to promote the town of Macclesfield and all manner of positive activities carried out in their name and to bring credit to the Town in all that the Town Crier does.

##### 4.2 **Responsible to**

Civic and Administration Officer on a day to day basis with overall responsibility held by the Town Clerk

##### 4.3 **Level of Commitment**

Throughout the year, the Town Crier is expected to support civic events, support the Mayoralty at various events and perform cries throughout the year promoting various events being held within the Borough. The amount of time to be devoted will be whatever is **considered mutually appropriate** to create a credible role as Town Crier.

##### 4.4 **Duties Involved**

To promote Macclesfield locally and further afield if deemed appropriate and beneficial to the Town

To support local organisations, charities and groups where they wish you to do so by your attendance at functions and activities

To open events and new businesses if requested to do so

To give talks if able to do so on the role of the Town Crier

To regularly perambulate the town to welcome residents and visitors alike  
Spreading warmth and joy amongst all people

To give regular shouts at a central point in the town to tell people of  
Forthcoming events and occasions in the towns

To support the Mayoralty, acting as escort when requested to do so and  
Announcing the Mayor when this is appropriate to do so

### **To become a member of the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers**

- All engagements, including any private work to be undertaken as Town Crier, to be subject to the approval of Macclesfield Town Council and the Town Clerk to help ensure these are appropriate to uphold the dignity of the post.

#### **4.5 Personal qualities required**

Strong sense of duty, together with diplomacy, courtesy and an outgoing and warm personality, which most people will readily relate to.

#### **4.6 Relevant Qualities / Experience**

##### **Essential**

- A clear rich voice with good volume even without amplification.
- Able to meet and interact well with people individually and in groups.
- Affable
- Good oral skills
- Good at organising self, reliable and punctual.

##### **Desirable**

- Can show that has worked with people of all kinds without discrimination and able to communicate well at all levels.
- Master of Ceremonies - Able to take on that role with some style if asked.
- Experience with working with volunteers

#### **4.7 Attributes**

- A team player but able to work on own initiative;
- Positive "Can - do" attitude;
- Able to stay neutral and not take sides.

#### **4.8 Skills**

The Town Crier will be expected to have, and to develop, a good local knowledge with an understanding of Macclesfield, its history, culture and businesses and to promote them accordingly

#### **5. Costume (Livery)**

The Town Crier will be required to wear the traditional costume of Town Crier when performing relevant duties. The Town Crier will receive items of clothing and equipment in order to perform those duties. These will remain the property of Macclesfield Town Council and must be returned at the end of the appointment. The livery should not be worn outside the Macclesfield unless on official engagements directly representing the town.

**6. Guild of Town Criers**

The Town Crier is encouraged to join the nationwide Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers or Loyal Company of Town Criers and the annual membership fee will be reimbursed by the Council. Attendance at competitions, unless at their own expense, must be agreed in advance by the Council through the Town Clerk.

Public Liability Insurance is also available through membership of the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers & Loyal Company of Town Criers

The Official Appointment of a Town Crier has to be brought before a full meeting of Macclesfield Town Council to vote in favour and noted in the Council Minutes

A provisional 12 month probationary period to be served by the Town Crier before appointment to the Permanent Post of Town Crier

**7. Commercial Activities**

Invitations to perform Commercial cries for local businesses in the area, such as the opening of stores etc, are both encouraged and allowed subject to prior approval from the Town Clerk to ensure they are appropriate to uphold the dignity of the post.

The Council has no preconceived view on the number or frequency of commercial cries that should be undertaken. The Town Crier will have full responsibility for arranging any commercial cries and for negotiating of a fee (if charged) for undertaking such engagements.

**Signed on behalf of Macclesfield Town Council**

Signature: .....

Position:.....

Name (print):.....

Date:

:

**Signed by Town Crier:**

Name (print):.....

Date: .....



## **Blandford Forum Town Council**

### TOWN CRIER & DEPUTY TOWN CRIER

Duties include representing the town by attendance at civic events within and outside of the town. which includes organising the Town Crier's regional competition as part of the Georgian Fayre. There are opportunities to represent the town by travelling to other Town Crier events across the South. An annual honorarium of £300 to the Town Crier and £200 to the Deputy Town Crier is paid, however no expenses are covered except for the cost of membership to the Guild of Town Criers.

# Skegness Town Council

## The Town Crier Duties:

By prior agreement with the Town Clerk's Office, accompany the Mayor or Deputy Mayor to an event.

The Town Crier must not attend any event in the Skegness Town Crier costume without the prior consent of the Town Clerk's Office.

The Town Crier may be asked to: -

- Assist the Mayor/Deputy Mayor or Town Council staff/members
- Call people to attention
- Announce the Mayor or Deputy Mayor
- Make a Town or Event Announcement or Declaration
- Thank people for their attendance or support
- Pose for photographs

The position is unpaid.

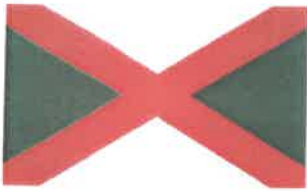
The Town Crier will be expected to sign an agreement to meet Council expectations in terms of conduct and behaviour and to comply with relevant Council Policies (in the same way that staff or other volunteers do). This will include a requirement to refrain from making any political or contentious comments whilst on duty and to never speak on behalf of the Town Council, Mayor or Deputy Mayor or to give the impression that this is the case.

As a bespoke costume is being made, the Council requires that the Town Crier will commit to undertake the role for a minimum of two years. The Town Crier will be expected to make arrangements for cleaning of the costume, the pre-agreed cost being claimed back by way of expenses.

The Town Crier may also claim reasonable expenses (e.g. parking/travel) for attending event, but this must be agreed by the Town Clerk's Office. The maximum expenses that will be refunded in any one financial year is £250.

## Skills and attributes

- Loud, clear and easily understood voice
- Confidence and self-assurance
- Ability and willingness to follow instructions
- Ability to read announcements
- Physically able to wear heavy costume for long periods, sometimes in hot or chilly conditions (e.g. at fetes or events)
- Ability to interact easily with all types of people
- Friendly, open and inclusive personality



# **BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL**

## **TOWN CRIER – VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT**

The following information provides an agreement between the Town Crier (A voluntary post within Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council) and Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.

This agreement is not a contract of employment, is binding in honour only, and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. That this agreement sits in parallel and is considered alongside the Job Description for the post (attached)

### **1. Definitions and Objectives**

- 1.1.** Bexhill-on-Sea town Council reinstated the role of Town Crier at a competition on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022, bringing back a tradition of making public announcements.
- 1.2.** The Town Crier role is a voluntary position undertaken by choice and is unpaid. The Town Crier is not invited to carry out work to replace paid staff.

### **2. Rights and responsibilities of volunteers:**

**2.1.** The Town Clerks office is responsible for ensuring that the Town Crier is clear about his/her rights and responsibilities and that the relationship between paid staff and the Town Crier(s) is mutually supportive

**2.2.** Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council recognises that the Town Crier will have the right to:

- Know what is expected of him/her
- Understand and agree to the description of the role of Town Crier
- Work in a safe and risk-free environment in line with Health and Safety requirements
- Comply with the councils Equality and Diversity policy
- Be covered under the Councils insurance policy whilst undertaking duties on behalf of the council
- Be consulted on decisions that will affect the work they are doing where practicable
- Ask for a reference

### **3. Expectations of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council**

**3.1.** The Town Crier represents Bexhill and its residents and is expected to:

- i.** Always maintain a high standard of behaviour and courtesy.
- ii.** Carry out their duties in a way that honours the traditions and heritage of the Town Crier role
- iii.** Ensure that the cries carried out are in good taste and in the spirit of the role
- iv.** Be reliable
- v.** Be Honest
- vi.** Treat all people equally regardless of race, creed, disability or political affiliation.
- vii.** Attend training as and when agreed
- viii.** Respect confidentiality

**3.2.** The Town Council has the right to cancel this agreement if the Town Crier fails to abide by the expectations outlined in 3.1 above or brings Bexhill-on-Sea into disrepute.

### **4. The Town Crier role**

**4.1.** The purpose of the role is to carry out duties that promote the town of Bexhill-on-Sea and any activities carried out in their name.

4.2. The town crier is responsible to the Assistant Town Clerk on a day-to-day basis with overall responsibility held by the Town Clerk.

4.3. The Town Crier is expected to support the Mayoralty and civic events and perform cries at various events being held within the Town. The amount of time will be whatever is considered mutually appropriate.

4.4. Duties include:

- i. To Promote Bexhill-on-Sea locally and further afield if deemed appropriate and beneficial
- ii. To support local organisations and charities, where they wish you to do so, by your attendance at functions and activities
- iii. To open events and new businesses if requested to do so
- iv. To give talks if able to do so, on the role of the Town Crier.
- v. To support the Mayoralty, acting as escort when requested to do so and announce the Mayor as appropriate.
- vi. To undertake private work as Town Crier subject to the approval of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.
- vii. Other duties at the discretion of the Town Clerk.

4.5. Skills, attributes, and qualities:

There are no formal qualifications to taking on the role of Town Crier. Desirable qualities include diplomacy, courteousness, and an outgoing and warm personality able to communicate well at all levels and with all ages. The Town Crier will be expected to develop a good understanding of Bexhill, its history, culture and business and to promote them accordingly.

5. Livery (Costume)

- 5.1. The Town Crier will be required to wear the traditional costume of Town Crier when performing the relevant duties.
  - 5.2. The Town Crier will receive items of clothing and equipment in order to perform their duties. These will remain the property of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council and must be returned at the end of the appointment.
  - 5.3. The livery must not be worn outside Bexhill-on-Sea unless on an official engagement directly representing the town.
6. The Town Crier is encouraged to join the Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers or Loyal Company of Town Criers. These are national organisations that cover Town Criers.
7. Commercial activities: Invitations to perform commercial cries for local business are both encouraged and allowed subject to clause 4.4.vi. above.

Signed on behalf of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council

Signed by Town Crier

Signed.....

Signed.....

Name (Print).....

Name (Print).....

Position.....

Date:

Date:

## **JOB DESCRIPTION: TOWN CRIER**

### **1. The Town Crier Duties**

- 1.1 To support the Mayoralty, acting as escort when requested to do so and announce the Mayor as appropriate.
- 1.2 To Promote Bexhill-on-Sea locally and further afield if deemed appropriate and beneficial
- 1.3 To support local organisations and charities, where they wish you to do so, by your attendance at functions and activities
- 1.4 To open events and new businesses if requested to do so
- 1.5 To give talks if able to do so, on the role of the Town Crier.
- 1.6 To undertake private work as Town Crier subject to the approval of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.
- 1.7 Other duties at the discretion of the Town Clerk.

1.8 The Town Crier may also be asked to: -

- Call people to attention
- Announce the Mayor or Deputy Mayor or other dignitaries as directed by the Town Clerk
- Make a Town or Event Announcement or Declaration
- Thank people for their attendance or support
- Pose for photographs for press and media coverage

### **2. Remuneration**

- 2.1 The position is unpaid.
- 2.2 The Town Crier will be expected to sign an agreement to meet Council expectations in terms of conduct and behaviour and to comply with relevant Council Policies (in the same way that staff or other volunteers do). This will include a requirement to refrain from making any political or contentious comments whilst on duty and never to speak on behalf of the Town Council, Mayor or Deputy Mayor or to give the impression that this is the case.
- 2.3 A bespoke costume is to be procured for the successful candidate(s), costs to be agreed by the Community Committee to be taken from the Mayoral budget in the region of £400.
- 2.4 The council requires that the Town Crier will commit to undertake the role for a minimum of two years.
- 2.5 The Town Crier will be expected to make arrangements for the cleaning and maintenance of the costume..
- 2.6 The Town Crier may claim reasonable expenses (e.g. parking/travel) for attending events. This must be agreed by the Town Clerk's Office.
- 2.7 The maximum expenses that will be refunded in any one financial year is £300.

### **3. Essential Skills**

There are no formal qualifications to taking on the role of Town Crier.

### **4. Desirable Skills**

- 4.1 Loud, clear and easily understood voice
- 4.2 Ability and willingness to follow instructions
- 4.3 Friendly and confident
- 4.4 Ability to read announcements
- 4.5 Able to interact easily with all types, levels, and ages of people
- 4.6 The Town Crier will be expected to develop a good understanding of Bexhill, its history, culture and business and to promote them accordingly.
- 4.7 Flexibility to attend events at evenings and weekends



Please return to: Mrs Samantha Brown  
Town Crier's Assistant  
Alton Town Council  
Market Square  
ALTON  
Hampshire  
GU34 1HD 01420 83986  
Email - info@alton.gov.uk

Alton Town Council  
Town Crier – Dave Parsons

## TOWN CRIER'S FUNCTION FORM

Name of organisation .....

Function .....

Date ..... Starting time ..... Finishing time .....

Address of venue .....

.....

Is car parking available? .....

What would you like the Town Crier to cry about? .....

.....

.....

Details of other VIPs attending .....

.....

.....

Special instructions .....

.....

.....

Name of person presiding .....

Will refreshments be provided?  yes  no

Details supplied by .....

Address .....

Telephone Number ..... E-mail address .....

\* There is a donation of £20, for up to an hour, to book the Town Crier. If you require the Town Crier for a longer period please discuss your arrangements with Samantha. Your donation will be donated at the end of the Town Mayor's year, in May, to their nominated charity.