



**BURY ST EDMUNDS
TOWN COUNCIL**

Civic Duties Protocol

February 2024

Town Council Civic Duties Protocol

This protocol provides guidance to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Town Councillors, and staff, to ensure correct procedures are followed in the undertaking of Civic Duties and the Mayoralty, and to ensure that the relevant budgets are spent appropriately. It considers the limited Council resources for this activity.

Background

Bury St Edmunds Town Council reinstated the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor in 2019. It should be noted that these new roles should not be constrained by the way it was fulfilled by other Town and Borough Councils.

A Mayor, by virtue of the office, can use his/her position to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector, mould social cohesion, etc. A Mayor could have countless meetings with dignitaries and numerous public engagements.

Mayoral Engagements

Role of the Mayor

The motive for undertaking an engagement must always be to promote the work and achievements of the people and parish of Bury St Edmunds, so local engagements are considered a priority.

Mayor:

- To chair meetings of the Council and enable its business to be carried out in an orderly and proper manner, having regard to statutory obligations and the constitution of the Council for the conduct of meetings.
- To preside, as ceremonial head of the whole Council and the Town, over its civic functions, and social occasions.
- To attend functions as a representative of the Council.
- To promote, raise the profile and gain publicity for projects and events that are of a good charitable or voluntary nature that benefits the citizens of the town, particularly smaller organisations.
- Carry out the duties of the post fairly and without discrimination, and in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Council.

Deputy Mayor:

- To assist the Mayor of the town of Bury St Edmunds.
- Deputise for the Mayor when the Mayor is unable to fulfil the duties of the post, at the request of the Mayor.
- Carry out the duties of the post fairly and without discrimination, and in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Council.
- If the Deputy Mayor is invited to an event that the Mayor is also attending, he or she attends as Deputy Mayor but may only wear the pendant. The Deputy Mayor will never wear robes if the Mayor is present.

(NB: *Civic Ceremonial*, the definitive guide for Mayors, Councillors and other officers says, 'All invitations should be sent for consideration to the Mayor as First Citizen and if the Mayor cannot attend, it may be appropriate to 'pass down' an invitation. However, this should be by no means automatic or desirable'.)

It is essential that every appointment/invitation is passed through the Civic Officer/Town Clerk. The Mayor must not attend any event that has not been planned through the Civic Officer. Often the Mayor will be approached in person, by letter, over the phone, by representatives of the charity, or an organisation asking him/her to attend a function. In this instance the Mayor must refer the person to the Civic Officer, who can advise on the availability of the Mayor and inform them of proper procedures and send out the appropriate civic event pro-forma to be completed.

If the Mayor accepts an invitation to attend a function in another local authority's area, it is a courtesy for the Town Council to seek the consent of the Mayor or Chairman of that authority to wear the chain of office, if this is required.

Twinning Invitations

Currently, official 'twinning' links have been established by the former St Edmundsbury Borough Council, with Kevelaer in Germany and Compiègne in France. The Mayor may be invited from time to time to attend civic ceremonial functions in the partner towns, but these would be at the Mayor's own expense. The Mayor will become president of the Twinning associations of Kevelaer and Compiègne.

The Civic Attire and Insignia

The Mayor may wear a robe of office, and will wear the chain and badge of office at all full civic events; otherwise only chains are worn. If the ceremony is out of doors and the Mayor is robed, they will wear a hat, which in the case of a man is a black cocked hat and for a lady a black tricorn hat. The full civic attire, i.e. robes and accoutrements, are to be worn for full civic events when other civic dignitaries are present, at the discretion of the Mayor. On normal day-to-day civic occasions, the Mayor will wear only the chain and badge of office. NB: At present, Robes are the property of West Suffolk Council and should be stored with them and collected and returned by the post-holder after each engagement.

The Mayor should dress formally at most engagements; casual clothes are not acceptable. A business suit or equivalent should always be worn underneath robes.

Selection of Mayor and Deputy Mayor

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Town Council are to be elected each year at the Annual Meeting. Members wishing to be nominated must be proposed and seconded by other members of the Council.

Once applicants are nominated at the meeting, they will be requested to make short verbal statements in support of their nomination, after which the vote will take place. The election of the Mayor will take place first, followed by that for Deputy, using the same procedure. If there is only one candidate for a position, then a verbal statement is optional. The vote shall proceed with votes cast, 'for', 'against', or 'abstaining'. Should there be more than one candidate, the vote shall then continue, as per Standing Orders.

There will not be any automatic right of succession nor limit on the number of terms a Mayor or Deputy Mayor might serve. However, the election process, as above, is to be followed at each Annual Meeting.

All Councillors have equal right to be considered for the posts, and when making nominations members should give regard to fair representation of gender, background and civic interests.

Budget

At present there is a very small Town Council budget for civic activities. Details of the Mayoral budget are to be confirmed at the annual budget round each year. It is important to uphold the office of Mayor and to provide the necessary support as expediently as possible, but it would send the wrong message to the tax payers of Bury St Edmunds if the Mayoralty budget was treated differently to any other aspect of the Council budget. Minor variations are to be expected but it is important that the budget is not significantly overspent.

The Mayor's Expenses

Should the Mayor incur any refundable expenses during the year, these can be refunded, on production of a receipt for allowable items or services. (See the relevant Town Council policies). If it is unclear whether an expense may be refunded, the Town Clerk will provide advice.

Civic Gifts

It is common practice for the Mayor or Deputy Mayor to be given gifts when attending major external engagements in their official capacity. Gifts are also often exchanged when other delegates visit the Town. It is custom and practice that the Mayor or Deputy Mayor receives such gifts on behalf of the Council and that they are forwarded to the Town Clerk for entry on the civic inventory and displayed as is appropriate.

Small gifts, such as badges or pens which are clearly indicated as a personal gift for the Mayor or Deputy Mayor, may be kept. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor should have regard to the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct for Councillors when deciding whether to receive and keep such gifts and should ensure that they are recorded in the hospitality register as required by the Code.

A small part of the budget may be made available to the Mayor for the purchase of gifts for visiting dignitaries, or to exchange on an external visit. The Clerk will advise on appropriate gifts, which may be as follows:-

- (a) Visiting dignitaries – a Town shield or paperweight
- (b) Twinning visits – a small clock, or other suitable item, appropriately engraved
- (c) Presentations – a glass paperweight, crystal bowl, china plate etc bearing an inscription; and
- (d) Small gifts for local organisation or youth visitors etc – badges, pens, Town literature etc.

When selecting appropriate gifts, the Mayor and Town Clerk should bear in mind the circumstances and ensure that the formality of occasion and the contribution of the recipient is properly reflected.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In accordance with Town Council policies, the Mayor will take into account the promotion of equality and diversity when deciding which engagements to accept or civic functions to hold, and will not accept invitations from or extend hospitality to organisations that unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, social background, gender, disability, age or sexuality.

Town Council Civic Events led by the Town Mayor:

3 rd Thursday of June	Jankyn Smyth Service, and Cake and Ale Ceremony
11 November	Armistice Day – War Memorial Angel Hill
November Annually	St Edmunds Day civic activities

Town Council Mayor should participate in:

	Royal and Lord Lieutenant's visits 'Freedom of Bury St Edmunds' events
Sunday nearest 14 September	Battle of Britain Commemorations, St Mary's Church
2 nd Sunday of October	Suffolk County Harvest Festival
Saturday and Sunday nearest 11 November	District Remembrance Services in the Abbey Gardens and at the war memorial on Angel Hill
2 nd Sunday in November	St Edmunds Day Service, St Edmunds Church
2 nd Sunday in December	West Suffolk Christmas Carol Service

Town Council Mayor may participate in:

Charitable and Educational Openings or Fundraisers (if there is a promotional benefit for the Town)

Government Events in the District (i.e. at RAF Lakenheath etc)

Commercial events (if there is a significant commercial benefit for the Town)