



**BURY ST EDMUNDS
TOWN COUNCIL**

Civic Duties Protocol

February 2020

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 takes into account the limited Council resources for this activity.

Background

The Town has not had its own Mayor since 2007, so this Protocol provides an opportunity for the Town Council to establish its own *modus operandi*. It should be noted that, although it draws on the former Borough of St Edmundsbury customs, Bury St Edmunds Town Council is not to be constrained by the role as it has been fulfilled by other Town or Borough Councils in the past.

Mayoral Engagements

Role of the Mayor

During the course of duties on behalf of the Town Council, the Mayor may undertake, up to 50 engagements each year. (These may increase in the future, in line with resources). 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. (See Appendix A for guidance.)

All requests for the attendance of the Mayor at public events should be put in writing to the Town Clerk, giving at least three weeks' notice. A Town Council Civic Events pro-forma, as attached, will be forwarded to the host, as appropriate, once the engagement is accepted, to ensure the Mayor has all the information they need to fulfil their duties.

The Town Clerk, or a designated officer, will liaise with the Mayor to check which engagements the Mayor wishes to accept. Clearly, the engagements must be appropriate for the Mayor to attend. The Mayor will need to balance, where possible, civic priorities against the need to honour prior engagements.

It is not appropriate for the Mayor to attend in an official capacity any engagement which is considered by the Clerk to be politically sensitive. Generally, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will attend without partner or consort, in order to keep costs to the Council to a minimum.

Twinning Invitations

Currently, official 'twinning' links have been established by the former St Edmundsbury Borough Council, with Kavelaer 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 may wish to become President of the two Twinning Associations of Kevelaer and Compiègne. NB: this aspect is to be agreed in the future.

The Role of the Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor is to attend engagements on behalf of the Mayor, in the absence of the Mayor but should not receive invitations directly. The Mayor has the discretion, on behalf of the Town Council, to decide which events should be delegated to the Deputy Mayor. If the Deputy Mayor is invited to an event that the Mayor is attending, he or she attends as a Councillor and not as the Deputy Mayor.

(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'.

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.

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.

The Mayor should dress formally at most engagements; casual clothes are not acceptable. A business suit or equivalent should always be worn underneath robes. The chain of office is to be pinned to the jacket, or alternatively loops may be fitted on the shoulder of the jacket, in order to hold the chain in place.

Meeting of Full Town Council

It is part of the Mayor's duties to Chair meetings of the Full Council, as laid out in Standing Orders. The Mayor is to uphold and promote Standing Orders, advised by the Town Clerk. If the Mayor is not able to attend, the Deputy Mayor is to Chair the meeting.

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 Mayorality 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 and Diversity

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.

February 2020

Appendix A - Formal Civic Events

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)

Other events

NB: Generally the Mayor would not accept invitations from outside the town unless there are significant benefits for the Town Council.