

GUIDELINES FOR THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The usage “Chair” is a matter of convention and is not reflected in statute. The usage “Chairman” is used in statute to refer to any person fulfilling that role, regardless of sex or gender identity. Instances of the usage “Chair” should be understood to have the same meaning as the statutory “Chairman”.

A local council must, by law, elect a Chair.

CHAIR**ELECTION OF CHAIR****In a non-election year:**

The Chair is elected annually at the annual meeting of the council in May.

The election of the Chair must be the first business of that meeting.

The retiring Chair must chair the meeting until the election of the new Chair.

Once elected, the Chair continues in office until the next annual meeting of the council, or until he or she resigns, is disqualified or vacates his or her seat.

The retiring Chair must chair the said next annual meeting of the council until the election of his or her successor is completed.

The Chair cannot be removed by a vote of the council.

The Chair is required to make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the prescribed form at the meeting at which he or she is elected, unless the council at that meeting permits that the declaration may be made at a later time, either at or before a later meeting.

If permission is so given to make the declaration before a later meeting, the declaration must be made in the presence of a Member or the Proper Officer of the council, and delivered thereafter to the council.

Members wishing to be elected to the role of Chair shall put their names forward verbally for consideration at the Full Council meeting in April and may address the council with a statement in support of their candidacy if they so wish.

If a Member wishes to be considered but cannot attend the meeting, he or she may send a written statement to be presented to the council by the incumbent Chair or a proxy.

At the annual council meeting in May, election of the Chair will be the first item of business on the agenda, and voting will be by show of hands.

The election must be decided by a majority of Members present and voting.

The new Chair becomes Chair at the point of election and upon signature of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The new Chair will inform the council at this meeting whether he or she wishes to adopt the style of Town Mayor. The council has no power to compel the adoption of the style, nor does it have any power to forbid the adoption of the style. The right to adopt or to decline to adopt the style of Town Mayor is inviolable and automatic to the Chair.

A Member may hold the office of Chair for no more than four consecutive terms.

Each term is subject to the same requirements of election as are detailed above.

There is no limit to the number of times in his or her council career that a Member may occupy the office of Chair provided that his or her consecutive terms do not exceed the stated four consecutive terms and that he or she is duly elected.

In an ordinary election year:

In an election year, if the retiring Chair has lost or has not stood for his or her seat on the council (i.e. he or she is no longer a councillor at the time of the Annual Meeting of the Council) he or she must still preside at the Annual Meeting of the Council until the successor has been elected.

In this circumstance, the retiring Chair has only a casting vote, and no vote as a councillor.

DUTIES, POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

DUTIES

(A “duty” is a legal obligation that the Chair *must* fulfil.)

The Chair **must** sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chair, **in addition to** that which he or she must sign as a councillor.

When present at a meeting of the Full Council, the Chair **must** preside.

The retiring Chair **must** chair the Annual Meeting of the Council until the election of the new Chair.

Where there is a tie in the election of a Chair, the retiring Chair **must** exercise his or her casting vote to break the tie.

When present at the Annual Town Meeting, the Chair **must** preside. If the Chair is not an elector of the parish, he or she may only exercise a casting vote at the Annual Town Meeting.

If he or she has exercised the power to call the Annual Town Meeting, the Chair **must** sign the public summons.

If the Chair wishes to resign his or her office (but not seat), he or she **must** give notice of that resignation in writing to the Town Council. In practice, this requires that the notice of resignation be provided to a meeting of the Town Council or be

submitted via email to all Councillors. This resignation takes effect immediately and the office immediately vacates.

POWERS

(A “power” is a right enshrined in law that the Chair *may* exercise as he or she sees fit.)

The Chair may, subject to the requirement for three clear days’ notice, call a meeting of the council at any time.

The Chair may, when presented with a requisition signed by two Members of the council, call an extraordinary meeting of the council.

The Chair possesses an original vote plus a casting vote which can be used in the event of a tied vote.

The Chair may call the Annual Town Meeting, subject to the statutory notice periods.

The Chair may adopt the style of Town Mayor. The council has no power to compel the adoption of the style, nor does it have any power to forbid the adoption of the style. The right to adopt or to decline to adopt the style of Town Mayor is inviolable and automatic to the Chair.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES

(A “responsibility” is an expectation of the role of Chair that is supported by custom or resolution.)

The Chair may expect to be addressed formally as “Chair” or “Mr/Madam Chair” when chairing a meeting of the Town Council.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to manage meetings of the council.

The Chair should be familiar with and understand the Standing Orders of the council.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to foster constructive relationships within the council.

Whilst occupying the role of Chair, the Chair should express the views of the council and not his or her personal views.

Once elected, the Chair is required to undertake Chairship training (available via the Essex Association of Local Councils). This training is mandatory for the incoming Chair in every civic year, regardless of the number of times he or she may have been elected to the Chair in the past. This maintains compliance with any shifts in legislature or best practise that may have occurred in any given civic year.

The Chair is the day-to-day contact for the Town Clerk and should work with the Town Clerk to ensure that the council acts lawfully.

The Chair will hold a pre-Agenda meeting with the Town Clerk to discuss the Full Council Agenda before it is published according to the statutory public notice deadline.

In the event that business is before the council in which the Chair has declared an interest, the Chair should transfer the Chair to the Vice-Chair (or other Member in the absence of the Vice-Chair, at the discretion of the Chair) for the duration of that item before leaving the chamber until the business of the item is concluded.

The Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees.

For the allowance sometimes designated as the Chair's Allowance, see below under Mayoral Allowance.

IMPORTANT DATES

The three most important dates in the Chair's civic calendar are:

The Annual Town Meeting, at which the outgoing Chair will (if the style of Town Mayor has been adopted) present cheques to the Town Mayor's Charities. The Annual Town Meeting is called before the Annual Meeting of the Council.

The Annual Meeting of the Council, at which the new Chair is elected and accepts or declines the style of Town Mayor.

The Civic Service, at which the new Chair is presented to the Town and presents the Town Awards.

These events must fall in this order for procedural reasons.

VICE-CHAIR

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

In a non-election year:

Members wishing to be elected to the role of Vice-Chair shall put their names forward verbally for consideration at the Full Council meeting in April and may address the council with a statement in support of their candidacy if they so wish.

If a Member wishes to be considered but cannot attend the meeting, he or she may send a written statement to be presented to the council by the incumbent Chair or a proxy.

The Vice-Chair is elected at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May from among the candidates, immediately after the election of the Chair, and voting will be by a show of hands.

The election must be decided by a majority of Members present and voting.

The new Vice-Chair has no power to choose to adopt the style of Deputy Town Mayor. The style has no existence in statute and is subservient to the adoption or refusal of the style of Town Mayor by the Chair.

The new Vice-Chair may decline to adopt the style of Deputy Town Mayor, in which case the Town will operate without a Deputy Town Mayor for the following civic period.

Should no Member propose him- or herself according to this schedule, the Vice-Chair may be appointed at any subsequent time.

The new Vice-Chair becomes Vice-Chair at the point of election and continues in office until the appointment of the next Chair at the next Annual Meeting of the Council is completed.

The Vice-Chair is not required to make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chair other than that that he or she makes as a councillor.

There is no automatic right of succession to the Chairship at the end of the Vice-Chair's term.

DUTIES

When present at a meeting of the Full Council, the Vice-Chair **must** preside in the absence of the Chair.

POWERS

When presiding, the Vice-Chair possesses an original vote plus a casting vote which can be used in the event of a tied vote.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES

The Vice-Chair may expect to be addressed formally as "Chair" or "Mr/Madam Chair" when presiding over a meeting of the Town Council.

It is the responsibility of the Vice-Chair to manage meetings of the council over which he or she is presiding.

Whilst occupying the role of Chair, the Vice-Chair should express the views of the council and not his or her personal views.

Once elected, the Vice-Chair is required to undertake Chairship training (available via the Essex Association of Local Councils). This training is mandatory for the incoming Vice-Chair in every civic year, regardless of the number of times he or she may have been elected to the Chair or the Vice-Chair in the past. This maintains compliance with any shifts in legislature or best practise that may have occurred in any given civic year.

In the event that business in which the Vice-Chair has declared an interest is before the council at a meeting over which the Vice-Chair is presiding, the Vice-Chair should transfer the Chair to another Member (at the discretion of the Vice-Chair) for the duration of that item before leaving the chamber until the business of the item is concluded.

The Vice-Chair may accept the style and role of Deputy Town Mayor if the style of Town Mayor is adopted by the Chair.

The Vice-Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees.

TOWN MAYOR:

The Chair of Great Dunmow Town Council has been entitled to adopt the style of Town Mayor since 2000.

The style of Town Mayor is indivisible from the position of Chair.

The Chair is not obligated by statute to adopt the style. In the event that an elected Chair does not wish to adopt the style of Town Mayor, the town will function without a Town Mayor for that civic period, and in addition no style of Deputy Town Mayor will exist as that style is subservient to the adoption of the style of Town Mayor by the Chair.

If it is the belief of the Chair that fulfilling the role of Town Mayor would require expenditures of energy, time or focus that would prove detrimental to his or her fulfilment of the office of Chair, he or she is encouraged to refuse the style of Town Mayor in favour of conserving his or her energy, time and focus for the office of Chair.

The Chair is elected to the office of Chair; the Town Mayor is not elected to the office of Town Mayor as there is no “office” of Town Mayor; it is a style only.

If the Chair resigns the office of Chair, or resigns from the council, is disqualified or otherwise vacates his or her seat, the style of Town Mayor immediately ceases to be available to him or her.

The Town Mayor has no powers that are not vested in the office of Chair.

Upon adopting the style of Town Mayor, the Town Mayor will be issued a copy of the Civic Handbook and provided with the services of the Mayoral Aide.

The Town Mayor is First Citizen of the town and, when in the town, gives precedence to none except for HM The King, members of the Royal Family, the Lord-Lieutenant (or Deputy Lord-Lieutenant if attending in his/her official capacity representing The King), and the District Chair.

If the style of Town Mayor has been adopted by the Chair, he or she is addressed formally as “Mr/Madam Town Mayor” when functioning as a civic dignitary, both in writing and in person.

The Chair should in the person of the Chairship act as a focal point for the Town Council in times of crisis, tragedy or triumph and in the person of the Town Mayorship so act for the benefit of the community.

The Town Mayor represents the Town Council at functions within Great Dunmow.

The Town Mayor represents the Town at functions outside of Great Dunmow.

The Town Mayor may use his or her position to encourage and promote community pride, local business, and the voluntary sector.

MAYORAL CONSORT

The Town Mayor may choose a Mayoral Consort. This person need not be the spouse or partner of the Town Mayor.

The Town Mayor is not obliged to choose a Mayoral Consort.

The style of Mayoral Consort is a courtesy style only and does not represent any official role or position.

Mayoral Consorts do not attend events without the Town Mayor. If the Town Mayor cannot attend, the Deputy Town Mayor may be approached in his or her stead.

Mayoral Consorts do not occupy the order of precedence unless accompanying the Town Mayor.

Mayoral Consorts are not expected to attend council meetings, although they may do so in common with any member of the public and under the identical conditions.

Where no Mayoral Consort is chosen to support the Town Mayor throughout the civic year, the Town Mayor may invite a Mayoral Escort to accompany him or her to any individual function, for the duration of which function the Mayoral Escort should be regarded as a Mayoral Consort.

INVITATIONS

Invitations to the Town Mayor to attend functions, etc. must be sent to the office.

The Town Mayor's Aide responds to all invitations on behalf of the Town Mayor after consulting the civic diary and the Town Mayor him- or herself.

The Town Mayor's Aide will advise the Town Mayor of what is expected; for instance, whether the Town Mayor will be expected to make a speech. (Any such speeches will be approved by the Town Clerk as Press Officer ahead of any event). The Town Mayor's Aide will inform the event organiser of any special requirements relating to the Town Mayor; for instance, dietary requirement or allergies.

If the Town Mayor receives an invitation directly, he or she will forward it to the Town Mayor's Aide in the first instance.

The Town Mayor should not accept an invitation unless he or she is satisfied of its relevance to the town, its non-partisan political nature and its propriety. The Town Mayor's Aide and the Town Clerk will be pleased to advise the Town Mayor on these points.

The Town Mayor should accept invitations to appropriate events and once accepted, make every effort to attend.

If the Town Mayor cannot attend an event, the Town Mayor's Aide will seek clarity from the host whether it would be acceptable for the Deputy Town Mayor to attend in his or her place.

The Town Mayor should not accept an invitation to attend a function in another area without the express consent of the Town Mayor or Mayor of that area. The Town Mayor's Aide should discuss this with his or her counterpart in the other area.

CHAINS OF OFFICE/DRESS CODES

The Chain of Office may be worn when chairing Town Council meetings if the Chair, having accepted the style of Town Mayor, so wishes.

Generally, the Mayor and Mayoral Consort will wear Chains of Office to an event. If in any doubt, the Town Mayor's Aide will check with the host.

If attending an event out of town, Chains of Office may not be worn unless approved by the Mayor or Town Mayor of the area to be visited.

If dress code is not specified on the invitation, the Town Mayor's Aide will seek clarity from the event organiser and inform the Town Mayor accordingly.

If no dress code is specified, the Town Mayor and Mayoral Consort will dress appropriately for the occasion with an assumed default to leisure suits or professionalwear for daytime events and formalwear for evening events.

TOWN MAYOR'S CHARITIES/TOWN MAYOR'S CHARITY FUND/EVENTS

It is traditional but not mandatory that the Town Mayor raises funds by hosting events for charity during the civic year.

Charities can be local or national, but Town Mayors should be mindful that local people may be more likely to support local charities than national ones.

The Town Council accounts separately for charity funds. There is a separate bank account, and the transactions do not form part of the council's accounts. An amount is kept in the account to enable an incoming Town Mayor to arrange a fund-raising event. For example, a band may need to be paid in advance of any ticket sales.

The events are organised by the Town Mayor in conjunction with the Town Mayor's Aide and Officers. Officers will advise and help with costings, venue availability,

ticket sales, catering, adverting, licensing etc., and will often help at the event itself. Bookings will be made by the office.

Usually the amount raised over the civic year will be divided between the chosen charities and the office will provide cheques for the retiring Town Mayor to present at the Annual Town Meeting.

TOWN MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE

The Town Council decides, during the budgeting process, on an allowance for the Town Mayor. This allowance can be used by the Town Mayor to cover any expenses incurred whilst carrying out civic duties; for instance, tickets to events, travel expenses and parking fees.

The office usually holds the Town Mayor's Allowance and reimburses on production of evidence of spend.

In the event that the Chair declines the style of Town Mayor, the allowance may be recategorized as the Chair's Allowance or dispensed with for the financial period in question.

Petty cash/financial orders apply.

CIVIC SERVICE

The Town Mayor is required to attend the Civic Service.

The Civic Service has its own protocol document.

ARMISTICE DAY and REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Town Mayor is required to attend both events.

Both events have their own protocol documents.

GREAT DUNMOW TOWN CARNIVAL

The Town Mayor is required to attend the Town Carnival.

The Town Carnival has its own protocol document.

TOWN AWARDS

The Town Mayor is required to present the Town Awards in years where these are awarded.

The Town Awards have their own protocol document.

TWINNING

The Town Mayor may be required to represent the Town at home or in Great Dunmow's Twin Town of Dourdan, France.

Twinning has its own protocol document.

DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

The style of Deputy Town Mayor is available to the Vice-Chair upon his or her election.

The style of Deputy Town Mayor is subservient to the style of Town Mayor. If the Chair declines to adopt the style of Town Mayor, the Vice-Chair may not adopt the style of Deputy Town Mayor.

The Deputy Town Mayor is entitled to the same right of precedence when (and only when) deputising for the Town Mayor.

The Deputy Town Mayor has his or her own Chain of Office. He or she cannot wear the Town Mayor's Chain of Office, even when deputising.

The Deputy Town Mayor can attend functions if the Town Mayor is unable to attend, and the host agrees. This is not automatic and will only happen by arrangement.

The Deputy Town Mayor is not invited to attend functions in his or her own right – only when deputising for the Town Mayor.

Revised 13th March 2025 by Finance and Policy Committee

Adopted 3rd April 2025 by Full Council

