



## SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

# The Roles of Town Mayor and Leader

Version	Adopted Date	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	May 2020	AM10-20	April 2021
2	April 2021	FC 208-21 (readopted with no changes)	April 2023
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4	April 2025	FC 058-25	March 2026
5	May 2025	AM 13-25	March 2026
6	February 2026	FC 035-26 (readopted with no changes)	February 2027

## Summary

The position of Town Mayor in Saffron Walden has existed since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and is highly recognised and regarded both throughout Saffron Walden and within the wider district.

Its purpose has been primarily of a ceremonial role but it is equally a position regarded as being the most senior member of the Council; notwithstanding compliance with the LGA 1972.s101 noting that no powers may be delegated to a single individual Councillor.

The role of Mayor has long-since been a position which works closely with the staffing team of the Council and in particular with the Town Clerk. This is a relationship borne out of necessity, providing a point of reference and clarification for staff in times of need. This symbiotic relationship has also served the Council well and is common practice for town and parish councils across the UK. The Town Clerk acts under delegated powers and authority as designated within the Council's procedural and policy documents and in accordance with LGA 1972, 101 (1)(a).

As anticipated within the Localism Act 2011 and the general process of devolution of services, the role and responsibility of Saffron Walden Town Council within the town is changing and evolving. The Town Council is involved and engaged in more activity and business than previously and the overseeing Mayoral element of the role has equally changed, requiring the role of Mayor to be active in both civic/ceremonial and business duties.

Recent post-holders to the position of Mayor have noted the ever-increasing duties and the compromises which need to be made in order to meet all expectations of the post. The Mayor's civic diary is busier than ever; with the Mayor asked to attend a number and range of social and civic events in their own time and often in the evenings or weekends. As the Town Council's activities increase, the time and support provided to staff has also increased and is more demanding.

Recent Mayors further note the difficulties which may be experienced by any future Mayors who work full time or have family / personal commitments; the requirements of the current post may actively discourage or prevent them from taking up Mayoral responsibilities. In compliance with Equal Opportunities, it is incumbent on the Council to ensure that the position of Mayor is open and available to all Councillors (subject to meeting qualifying criteria as detailed within the Council's Mayor Making Policy).

It was resolved at the Full Council meeting on 9 March 2020 that the responsibilities of the Mayor should therefore be split, with a new position of Leader of the Council, and that the split of responsibilities would be as resolved at that meeting. This document sets out the formal Council policy regarding the Mayor and Leader.

There are no financial implications in splitting the role of Mayor to incorporate a Leader role. Both roles will be undertaken by elected Councillors who receive no allowance or reward in their capacity as Councillors or Mayor.

### **The Role of Town Mayor:**

- a) The Town Mayor is the Chairperson of the Council;
- b) The Town Mayor is the civic head of the Council and first citizen of the town. He/she will be a symbol of the authority and an expression of social cohesion;
- c) The Town Mayor will chair meetings of Full Council and will exercise political neutrality and will have a casting vote in accordance with LGA 1972, Sch 12, para 39(2);
- d) Nominations to the positions of both Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be in accordance with the Town Council's published "Mayoral Selection" policy;
- e) The Town Mayor will be elected annually at the Annual Meeting in accordance with LGA 1972, ss15(2);
- f) The Deputy Mayor will be elected annually at the Annual Meeting. In accordance with SWTC's "Mayoral Selection" Policy, version 2, revised January 2020, paragraph 18 – the role of the Deputy Mayor "is not a rising right of office";
- g) The Deputy Mayor will preside at Council meetings in the absence of the Mayor and will fulfil the role of Mayor in all other respects if the Town Mayor is unavailable to fulfil the role;
- h) The Mayor to retain ex-officio membership to all Town Council Committees.

### **The Role of Leader and Deputy Leader**

The role of the Leader does not infer any additional right or responsibility of the position; at all times Council will comply with LGA 1972, s 101.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council will ordinarily hold office for a period of one year and shall be elected as follows:

- i) In an election year at the first Council meeting following the ordinary day of elections to the Council;
- j) In a year which is not an election year, at the first Council meeting held in May and after the positions of both Mayor and Deputy Mayor have been elected;
- k) Whenever a vacancy arises during their term of office.

- l) Nominations to the positions of both Leader and Deputy Leader will be in accordance with the Town Council's published "Mayoral and Leadership Selection" policy;

**The Leader will have the following duties:**

- a) Overseeing the preparation of business for Council consideration;
- b) To act as the liaison between the majority group of the Council and the Town Clerk in indicating the priorities and programmes of the Group for inclusion in Council business and their likely reactions to new policies or projects;
- c) To be the first port of call for the Town Clerk when an issue arises that requires a political or policy response from the Council and the issue does not naturally fall within the terms of reference of any of the standing committees;
- d) To direct local strategic policy and budget setting; effectively to support and enact policy and **not to set** policy (being contrary to LGA 1972, s101);
- e) The position of Deputy Leader is to support the role of Leader, deputising in his/her absence
- f) The role of Deputy Leader is not a "rising right of office" but it is recognised that there is significant benefit in the Deputy Leader subsequently being elected to the position of Leader.
- g) The Leader to retain ex-officio membership to all Town Council Committees.

**Removal from Office**

In the exceptional circumstances where Council may wish to remove either the Mayor and/or the Leader from Office, a vote of no confidence will be moved. If by resolution, either position becomes vacant through a vote of no confidence, Council will elect to the vacancy with immediate effect or at the earliest possible opportunity (subject to any rules or policies governing the Mayoral / Leader election).

**Procedural Matters / Amendment to Policy and Procedures**

Town Council policies may require amending to reflect this change and these will come forward as formal amendments to Council/Committee at appropriate times. No fundamental changes to policies or procedures are required as the defining of the two roles does not seek to create any new responsibilities but rather splits the existing into manageable elements for the post holders. In the event of any conflict, this Policy has precedence.

## **Membership to Committees**

The Mayor and Leader **are** both ex-officio members of every Committee, as determined in Standing Orders 4d(xvii), this policy does not change or amend that entitlement in any respect.

The Deputy Mayor or Deputy Leader of the Council will **not** be an ex-officio member of every Committee but may be a Member of any Committee in their own right and may act as a Committee substitute in accordance with Standing Orders 4d(v).