



# **Mayoral Regalia for the Lowestoft Town Council**

**A report on the history, present condition and  
suggestions for new purchases of mayoral robes  
and accessories**

Written by A. Taylor  
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# The History of the Lowestoft Mayoral Regalia

When Lowestoft was a Borough, it had an official Mayor. The first mayor was elected in 1885 and was Major Selwyn Wollaston Humphrey, who stayed in office a record 12 terms. Before that, Lowestoft was governed through parish councils and manor courts. In 1974, Lowestoft Borough was dissolved and absorbed into the Waveney District Council (WDC) and ceased to exist as a stand-alone entity.

Between 1974 and 2016, the WDC appointed a ceremonial mayor to cut ribbons and attend events. The robes now owned by the Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) are from that time. While no one can say when they were purchased, it is guessed that they are at least 20 years old and could well be older.

In 2017, Lowestoft Town Council was established and inherited the ceremonial robes, mace, and accessories from the WDC.

The LTC Mayor is chair of the Council and has official day-to-day duties that don't require any special regalia, but there are also duties outside of the council chambers where the Mayor is the public face and representative of the town, and those ceremonies and events require mayoral regalia. These duties include cutting ribbons for new business and projects, representing the town at official ceremonies such as Remembrance Day, meeting and greeting dignitaries who come to visit the town, and representing the town during national events and visits by Royalty.

## Mayoral Ceremonial Regalia

**Mayoral robes and regalia have a long history and civic robes date to medieval England and a time when mayors were responsible for law and order within their cities.** When they were magistrates, mayors assumed the traditional judicial dress as a symbol of authority. The discipline, orderliness and freedom of the United Kingdom has for centuries been held in the highest regard, and the Mayor's robes are the outward symbol of stability, justice and the importance of the individual and his role in local government.

**Within the town, the robes are an important symbol of local pride and community cohesion.** The Mayor is a concrete and visible symbol of Lowestoft and as such, local citizens should be able to easily recognise the Mayor in a sea of dignitaries and know that they are being represented with dignity and pride.

**Just as judges today wear scarlet robes in criminal cases when they act for the monarchy, and violet ones in civil cases, so did the traditional Mayor** who was, for many years in towns like Lowestoft, also chief magistrate. Red was used for

royalty and momentous events and violet or blue for everyday activities. Lowestoft Town Council has in its wardrobe red robes for the Mayor and black silk robes for the Deputy Mayor.

**The fur trims** (usually squirrel) seen on many mayoral robes is a hold-over from the middle ages, when fur trimming was the mark of nobility and mayors wanted to be seen equal to the aristocracy.

Oliver Cromwell outlawed fancy mayoral robes (as he did many things) because of the elaborate embellishments and fur that echoed nobility and represented local authority. After his reign, the robes found their way out of hidden lofts and clothes chests and were reintroduced. The violent regime of the Roundheads and the equally violent counter reaction to reject their rule are probably why the British have been so reluctant to give up ceremonial dress and why the style of mayoral robes are frozen to a pre-Civil War time.

**The jabot or lace collar** many mayors wear over the robes seems to be an import from French nobility, around 1650.

**A livery collar or chain of office is a collar or heavy chain**, usually of gold, worn as insignia of office or a mark of fealty or other association in Europe from the Middle Ages onwards. Most British and Irish mayors wear a collar/chain of office. The mayor's spouse may have a much smaller version. These are worn over normal clothes when on official duties and over the ceremonial robes when they are worn.

**When bicorn/tricorn hats are worn, male mayors traditionally wear a bicorn hat and female mayors traditionally wear a tricorn.** The bicorn hat is a style that dates back to the 17th century, when it was designed and worn for protection. The brim of the hat was tilted up to allow for soldiers to carry their muskets without knocking the hat off. In the UK, the hats can be traced back to 1695, when the French Huguenot Corne family arrived in London bringing with them the skills of Parisian hat making, eventually putting their name to the 'tricorn' hat, which remains today

### **Lowestoft Ceremonial Regalia**

The Lowestoft Mayor and Deputy Mayor has a ceremonial chain, robes, jabot, and a hat (bicorn). There is no provision for female mayors.

## **Mayoral Regalia the LTC Owns and Condition**

Presently, the ceremonial dress that is owned by the LTC consists of -

- three red mayoral robes,

- one black silk robe for the Deputy Mayor
- bicorn hat with gold trim (Mayor)
- bicorn hat with silver trim (Deputy Mayor)
- two jabots
- Mayor's chain
- Deputy Mayor's chain

The condition is as follows -

- All of the red wool mayoral robes are in an extremely worn condition with rips and tears on seams due to the extreme age of the fabric weakening under the weight of the heavy wool. The fur smells when it gets wet. Badly.
- The Deputy Mayor's silk robes are in tatters.
- The bicorn hats are worn, but serviceable.
- The chains are undistinguished reproductions made of base metal and in worn condition, but are serviceable.
- The jabots are too small for adults and are worn and stained. They look like they came from a dance or costume company and are for children, so they are not of any quality and are not long enough nor can they fit around an adult neck.
- There is no provision for female mayors or deputy mayors.

# LTC Requirements for New Regalia

**There is no national standard or recommendation for what makes up the mayoral regalia.** Tradition and custom give some guidance, but in the end, it's up to each city or town to look at what they feel should be included in a design that represents their particular town and its history.

**Having ceremonial robes is important to the town.** They foster local pride and are a positive symbol of not only British values, but local values. For a symbol to work, it must be recognisable and understood, so this author feels that first and foremost, any new mayoral robes must *look* like mayoral robes, complete with the accompanying regalia. This means following the general mideaval pattern of full robes, with cartridge gathers, long flowing sleeves, dark bands of velvet trim, a hat, jabot, and chain.

However, as seen in many other towns, the basic framework or pattern can be tweaked and altered to follow local values and traditions.

## **Recommended changes bespoke to LTC to the basic model include-**

- **No fur.** Fur is a great expense and goes against our council commitment to preserving endangered species (when it's real fur) or use of plastics (when it's fake fur). This author recommends using embroidered facings where the fur would be to give the visual look (from a distance) and give a luxurious texture to the front of the robes (see drawings in the appendix).
- **Color changes.** A shade of red that is not true scarlet, but a darker red that echoes the red sails seen in the old fishing fleet and the red in the LTC logo. Blue and gold trims to refer to the sun and the sea and match the LTC logo colours.
- **Use natural fabrics** (cotton, wool or linen) and of UK manufacture, if possible.
- **A tricorne hat** for female mayors/deputy mayor with an interchangeable cockade.
- **Cotton or linen jabot in a non-lace style.** This plainer style will refer to the no-nonsense, industrial base of the town and our commitment to no plastics and synthetics. The Mayor will have a white jabot and the Deputy Mayor a blue jabot.
- **Pockets** in the sleeves or hidden in the sides of the gown, so that the wearer doesn't have to carry a handbag and has a place for speeches, ID cards, keys, phone, etc. The present model assumes a man will wear it and have pockets in trousers and jacket.
- **Shoulder epaulets** to hold the chain and not require that another person is there to dress the mayor.

- **The overall weight should be as light as possible while still being sturdy.**  
The present robes are very heavy and cause back aches. They would be very difficult for a disabled or elderly mayor to wear.
- **Sizing.** There should be three of robes in the same design in men's small, large, and XL large and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will use the robe that fits their frame the best.
- **Differentiation.** The Mayor and Deputy Mayor can be recognised by their different chains, jabots and hats. The Mayor will have a white jabot, mayoral chain and gold cockade on the hat. The Deputy Mayor will have a blue jabot, the deputy mayor chain and a silver cockade on the hat.

# Tender Brief

The Lowestoft Town Council is seeking tenders for mayoral robes and accessories. The LTC will see a cost for total of three robes in three sizes, 4 jabots in two colours, and two tricorne hat or a single tricorne with a removeable rosette.

**Material-** 100% Wool for primary material, UK manufacture if possible (please state the country of origin), medium to lightweight. LTC red. Trim in wool or velvet, in accordance with your submitted design. Lining in lightweight cotton. Avoid synthetics or plastics if at all possible, in keeping with the LTC climate emergency declaration. There will be no fur. All materials will be dye fast and water cleanable.

**Basic construction/pattern-** traditional mayoral style, cartridge pleated, long and full academic style sleeves with either pockets in sleeves or a large hidden inset pocket on the side with a hidden zipper or flap. Shoulder epaulets to hold the mayoral chain. Sturdy hook and eye or button closures in front, hidden. French or neatly finished seams inside.

**Decorative elements-** bands of custom machine embroidered wool or velvet, not to exceed three colours of embroidery in LTC red, blue, and gold will replace the traditional fur decorative panels. An embroidered panel on the back shoulder yoke will repeat the front design motifs

**Jabots-** Two plain pleated cotton or linen jabots in white with neck fastened with a button and buttonhole and featuring machine bespoke embroidery. Two plain pleated cotton or linen jabots in LTC blue with neck fastened with a button and buttonhole and featuring machine bespoke embroidery.

**Fittings and Sizes-** As the robes will be in standard sizes, there will be no need for bespoke fittings and tailoring.

**Durability-** The robes must be constructed and finished to a durable, high standard and to hold up under their own weight in a seaside environment where outside ceremonies can take place in windy and rainy weather. They must be able to take a bit of rain and not be ruined and not tear themselves apart in windy weather.

**Please refer to the sketches for visual guidance on the completed robe.** The exact measurements of the finished robe (over all length, sleeve length, etc.) will be deferred to the tailor's experience and expertise with generous finished length to end about mid-calf on a person who is 5'6" and knee length on a person who is 6'2".

**Colours-** The words "Lowestoft Town Council" is true black.  
Hex #= 00000

CMYK= C (75%), M (68%), Y (67%), K (90%)  
Pantone= Black 6C

Sail (rust red)  
Hex #= b12029  
CMYK= C (21%), M (99%), Y (95%), K (12%)  
Pantone= 7621C

Sea (light blue grey)  
Hex #= 7ca9c3  
CMYK= C (53%), M (23%), Y (15%), K (0%)  
Pantone= 7695C

Sun (buff yellow)  
Hex #= f7e0a5  
CMYK= C (3%), M (10%), Y (41%), K (0%)  
Pantone= 7401C

### **Internet search of companies**

Walters of Oxford <https://www.walters-oxford.co.uk/>  
Michaels Civic Robes <https://www.civicrobes.com/>  
Robes of Distinction <http://www.robsofdistinction.org.uk/>  
Ede and Ravencroft <https://www.edeandravencroft.com/ceremonial-dress/other-robos/>

# **Carbon Footprint Statement and the LTC Commitment to Being a Climate Emergency Aware Council**

The Lowestoft Town Council has declared itself to be a Climate Emergency Aware council and as such has a responsibility to look at the impact of its purchases and actions on ecological and environmental issues.

## **The climate impact of purchasing new robes come under issues of sustainability, environmental impact, and how we encourage biodiversity.**

The principles the LTC will use when considering purchases of clothing will be-

**1. To use as few plastic and synthetic products as possible** and when there is no alternative to plastics, to use, when possible, recycled plastics. This is not a total ban on plastics, because a plastic-free alternative might not be on the market, but the weight will be to use as few non-recyclable and plastic materials as is practical and possible and that active effort will be made to search out environmentally friendly alternatives. Whenever possible, natural fabrics manufactured from sustainable processes will be used.

**2- To not use fur as a decorative element** and to never use any animal products such as fur, horn, or leather from an endangered or threatened species. Animal products such as leather that are sustainably sourced and created as a by-product of food manufacture is welcome and permitted, especially as a substitution for plastic. As an example, leather straps produced from beef cattle processing can be used instead of plastic straps.

**3- To use locally sourced and UK manufactured materials whenever possible** to encourage UK industry and to reduce our transportation carbon footprint. An active effort will be made to search out UK manufacturers.

**4- To buy high quality clothing fit for purpose and for the long term.** Every effort will be made to reduce, reuse and repair and so clothing will be considered as to whether it can be repaired and cleaned without using harmful chemicals or dry cleaning processes. When considering the cost of clothing the Council will consider the cost per wear (not the cheapest purchase cost), the sturdiness of the construction, and the cost of cleaning and maintenance.

<https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/fashion-carbon-footprint-joaquin-phoenix-trnd/index.html>

*The fashion industry is one of the most profitable in the world at more than \$2.5 trillion, according to the United Nations.*

*It also has one of the largest carbon footprints of all industries. Fashion production, manufacturing, shipping and use is responsible for 10% of the world's annual carbon emissions, the UN Environmental Programme found.*

*Nearly every step in the supply chain of a garment contributes to the industry's carbon output, said Tasha Lewis, an associate professor of fiber science and apparel design at Cornell University's College of Human Ecology.*

*Growing textile materials like cotton requires land and water, and lots of it. The fashion industry produces about 20% of global waste water.*

*Synthetic materials like polyester and nylon, fabrics that keep clothing stretchy, are made with fossil fuels. Textile production can generate as much as 1.5 trillion pounds of carbon emission every year.*

*The manufacturing phase relies on machine power. Finished garments are shipped by plane, train, boat and truck, all energy-intensive modes of transport.*

*In stores, garments hang on plastic hangers. They're put in plastic bags and packaged in layers of plastic. Only about half of packaging materials were recycled in 2017.*

*Once clothing in a consumer's possession, it becomes worse for wear. Washing clothes uses about 41 gallons of water per load, on average, and the average American family washes about 300 loads of laundry every year.*

*Chemicals in the detergents whirl in the water. Microfibers strip off synthetic fabrics, as many as 700,000 fibers in a single load of laundry, and leach into drinking water and oceans.*

*And when the consumer outgrows the garment, it'll most likely end up in a landfill: Of the 16.89 million tons of textiles generated in the US in 2017, about 11.15 million tons were landfilled.*

## Appendix 2- Email from Michael's Civic Robes

Dear Alice,

Thank you for getting in contact.

We make Mayoral robes out of four different fabrics that have different qualities and price points.

Doeskin & Melton are both a heavy duty merino wool that is very long last.

The panama Wool and Polyester are lighter weight fabrics that we use if the customer requires a lightweight/summer robe.

Looking at a picture of your existing Mayor's Robe, it looks like a real fur trim so it's a very high chance that the existing fabric is Doeskin.

The cost of a Mayoral robe are as follows:

- Doeskin: £1,645.45
- Melton: £1,415.15
- Panama Wool: £1,252.00
- Panama Polyester: £992.80

I'm more than happy to send fabric samples or visit in person to show you the fabrics if that would help?

Regarding the Deputy Mayor's Robe, I've not been able to find a picture of the style of robe.

Would you mind sending me an image of the Deputy Mayor Robe so I can provide costings for that as well.

We also make the Bicorns, Tricorns, Jabots and Laced Sleeves.

I have noticed that you wear a Bicorn on your pictures.

Usually the Civic tradition and history is that a Female Mayor would wear a Tricorn and a Male Mayor would wear a Bicorn. As every Council have different histories and traditions, it might be worth asking a few Councils nearby to see what they wear.

I hope this helps and I will look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Michael

Michael Stopford  
Business  
Development  
Manager

Intramark Group  
Limited  
Windsor Lodge  
56 Windsor Street  
Burbage  
Leicestershire  
LE10 2EF

07738 172011  
0117 9099988  
Michael@Civic  
Robes.com  
www.CivicRobe  
s.com

## **Appendix 3- Walters of Oxford**

Dear Alice

Many thanks you for most valued email enquiry ,

We would be delighted to be of service to Lowestoft Town Council in the supply Mayoral gowns .

We have been supplying Town Councils , Borough Councils , District councils with Gowns and Robes for over 25 years and the appreciative feed back we have received lead us to believe we supply quality garments at sensible prices .

I have attached some pictures of our work , but you can also gain more info about our business @

[www.walters-oxford.co.uk/ceremonial-robles-and-livery-gowns.html](http://www.walters-oxford.co.uk/ceremonial-robles-and-livery-gowns.html)

We would be pleased to offer you our quotation for the supply of Mayoral gowns , and any other gowns you are looking to replace or obtain.

We look forward to hearing from you

Kindest Regards

Adrian Palfreyman

Walters & Co

Oxford

## Appendix 3- Ede and Ravenscroft

Dear Alice,

Thank you for your email.

Please find attached our current Municipal price list.

Kind regards,

Chris

**Christopher Allan**  
Court & Ceremonial Manager

**Direct Line** +44 (0)207 344 2014

**Email** [Chris.Allan@edeandravenscroft.com](mailto:Chris.Allan@edeandravenscroft.com)

**Tel** +44 (0)20 7405 3906 **Fax** +44 (0)20 7831 2701

Ede & Ravenscroft | 93 Chancery Lane | London | WC2A 1DU

## Possible Robe Design

This design uses LTC colours and embroidered panels instead of fur. The panels can have embroidery that speaks to our heritage, such as smacks or a compass rose to speak to our easternmost location.



A Tricorn hat can be ordered that speaks to our colors and matches the robe, such as the example above that has local colours and trim.