

(COAT OF ARMS)



LOWESTOFT TOWN COUNCIL

Civic Ceremonial

Mayoral Handbook & Guidance Notes

CIVIC CEREMONIAL

Mayoral Handbook & Guidance Notes

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Introduction

Congratulations on your election as Mayor of the Council for the Town of Lowestoft. As Mayor you will often receive queries concerning the Town, its history, the insignia, the Town Hall and the history of the Mayoralty when you attend events and represent the people of Lowestoft and Lowestoft Town Council. Similarly, you as Mayor will have your own questions about the Mayoralty.

This handbook has been produced to provide information and guidance in your new role.

The notes and information have been compiled from various sources and should you have any queries that have not been addressed in this handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the office and we will endeavour to find the answer for you.

History of Mayoralty

The words “Mayor” and “Major” derive from the same Latin word “Magnus”, meaning great. The office of Mayor, together with the Domesday Book and the feudal system, were brought to this country by the Normans (the office has existed on the European continent since at least the fifth century).

The position of Mayor is one of the most ancient offices in British history and has undergone many changes in its role, importance, and public perception throughout the centuries. The first English Mayor was the Mayor of London, Henry Fitz-Ailwin, appointed in 1189 by Richard I.

A few important dates relating to the Mayor of Lowestoft:

- The first Mayor of Lowestoft was William Youngman, elected in 1885 when the Lowestoft Borough Council was established.
- In 1974 the Borough was abolished, by this time the Borough had been served by fifty-five Mayors.
- During the First World War (1914-1918) the position of Mayor was held by J. W. Brooke (1913-1916) and Mayor F. Spashett (1916-1918)
- During the Second World War (1939-1945) the position of Mayor was held by S. W. Humphrey.

Female Mayors

The style of address for civic posts is largely a matter of custom and tradition and is for each Council to decide, so long as it is consistent.

Most Councils and office holders choose between Mayor, Madam Mayor or Lady Mayor. However, it is important to note that a female Mayor is not referred to as a Mayoress and a female Lord Mayor is not a Lady Mayor.

Lowestoft Town Council has commonly adopted ‘Mayor’ or ‘Madam Mayor’ as the style of address for female Mayors.

Duties & Precedence

A Mayor, by virtue of the office, can use their position to stimulate community pride, encourage business, promote the voluntary sector and mould social cohesion, through their meetings with dignitaries and numerous engagements.

The Mayor is seen by many as the embodiment of the Council and as such should uphold the highest standards in all aspects of public life. The Mayor must be capable of enhancing the Council's reputation as it is such a public position.

The role of Mayor certainly differs to being a councillor; it has different "rules", different working hours, different restraints and it is often a physically and mentally tiring job. It is also a hugely enjoyable and rewarding job if entered into in the right spirit.

Roles and responsibilities

Mayor:

- To chair meetings of the Full 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 host events, receive and welcome members of the royal family, dignitaries, and visitors, observing civic protocol.
- 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 benefit 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.

Mayoress/Consort/Escort:

Whilst not a role recognised by law, the role of Mayoress was originally bestowed on the Mayor's wife. The common practice now, if the Mayor chooses to appoint a Consort/Escort, allows for the role to be undertaken by a spouse, partner, friend or other relative and they are accorded precedence alongside the Mayor. It is generally understood that they will provide assistance as follows:

- Personal support to the Mayor

- Accompany the Mayor on engagements
- Observance of Civic Protocol

Deputy Mayor:

- To assist the Mayor of the Town of Lowestoft.
- Deputise for the Mayor, when the Mayor is unable to fulfil the duties of that post, at the request of the Mayor.
- Support the Mayor at annual civic events and other events hosted by the Council, 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.

In carrying out their roles, the Mayor, Mayoress, Consort, Escorts or Deputy Mayor, should consider the public nature of their office. Appropriate behaviours and manner should be observed so as to not bring the Council into disrepute. They should follow the advice and guidance issued by the Officers and should not:

- Attend any functions or otherwise give support to any organisation or person whose objectives are contrary to law and/or Council policy.
- Solicit engagements or visits or otherwise procure favours by virtue of office.
- Attend any functions/events without being booked through the office. All invitations **must** be booked in the Mayoral Diary and the necessary protocol form completed for each event.

On rare occasions when the Mayoress/Consort is unable to escort the Mayor to an appointment, the Mayor can choose to either attend alone or take another person to escort them. Should the Mayor wish to take another escort, this person must **not** wear the consort chain/badge and Officers should be given advance notification of the person attending so they can inform the person/organisation who had invited the Mayor.

Lowestoft Town Council's approach has often been to bestow the title of Consort to the Mayor's partner. The Mayor is free to choose who may accompany them to civic events and functions, but anyone other than their Consort is dubbed the 'Mayor's Guest'.

The effect of becoming Mayor

The Mayor's personal life will inevitably be affected by their post as it requires more working hours than an ordinary councillor, and often more unsocial hours.

The effect on personal and religious beliefs

As Mayor, a councillor represents all sections of the Council, not merely those who support a particular political, social, or religious view. The Council will have policies on a whole host of matters, and it is the role of the Mayor to promote these policies. It is also the role of the Mayor to acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity in the area. A Mayor cannot deliberately avoid invitations to particular places, merely because they are politically opposed to such institutions. A Mayor with a specific religious belief should support and attend other services, as should a Mayor who is an atheist. The office of Mayor belongs to the public not the individual who occupies it or the officers who advise it. None of the above is, of course, applicable in circumstances where groups or individuals promote racial, religious, or social disharmony.

The pomp, circumstance, and protocol

The traditional robes and chains worn to events and the numerous protocols trace back to the history of the town a Mayor represents and are important to its residents. However, uniformity and constraint are not the aims of protocol, and most Mayors are able to operate within these constraints whilst adding their own personality and flair to the proceedings.

Mayoral Precedence

Mayors and the Town Council Officers should seek to ensure that the host of functions, ceremonies and events accord the Mayor proper precedence. Similarly, although the Mayoress, Consort or Escort has no legal status, they customarily take precedence immediately after the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor assumes the precedence of the Mayor when they are deputising for the Mayor, rather than when acting as a Deputy.

The Consequences of Mayoral Precedence

The rights of precedence enjoyed by the Mayor do come with duties and obligations:

- The Mayor should consider with great care the acceptance of office for any local organisation during the year of office, although the acceptance of traditional posts (e.g., President, Vice-Chairmanship of long-standing organisations) is generally acceptable. The office of Mayor should not be allowed to be used by organisations to confer favours; the honour and dignity of the office of Mayor being associated with that organisation should be sufficient.
- The Mayor will, as a matter of course, receive the guests and preside at civic functions. At other functions, the Mayor should be seated at the top table on the right hand of the Chair. If the Mayor is to speak, their toast or reply should appear early on the toast list.

- The Mayor should lead the citizens in an appropriate and dignified manner. Throughout the year of office, many people or organisations may wish the Mayor to open their business or attend events relating to their project, as the office of Mayor carries a large amount of status. The Mayor should not give patronage to any appeal or society unless they are satisfied of its relevance to the area, its non-party political nature, and its propriety.
- The Mayor enjoys precedence in their own area – but not that of neighbouring towns/parishes. Therefore, the Mayor should not accept an invitation to attend, in an official capacity, a function in another area without the express consent of that area. Such consent should be discussed between the appropriate Officers. If consent to attend in another area is forthcoming, the Mayoral robes and chains should not be worn unless approved by the Mayor/Chair of the area to be visited.

Engagements/Invitations

It is essential that every appointment is organised through the Town Council Officers. The Mayor must not attend any event that has not been planned through the Town Council Office. Lowestoft Town Council will provide a Mayoral Engagement form to any invitation made to the Mayor. Should the Mayor be approached in person, by letter, over the phone or an organisation asking them to attend a function, the Mayor **must not make any commitment**, but refer the inquirer to the Town Council Office, who can advise on the availability of the Mayor, inform them of the proper procedures and send out the engagement form to be completed. This prevents the possibility of a clash of functions and helps to plan the Civic Year.

Just as it is important to give the Mayor's hosts as much information about the Mayor as possible, it is vital for the Mayor to get as much information from the host.

The booking form is sent to every host for completion and return to the Town Council Office. This engagement form consists of questions such as:

- Date of Event
- Title of Event
- Purpose of Event
- Venue Address
- Name of Organisation
- Contact Name
- Contact Email
- Contact Telephone Number
- Event start and finish time, including the requested arrival time for the Mayor
- If reserved parking will be provided for the Mayor
- If refreshments will be provided
- Dress Code
- If the Chain and/or Robes are required to be worn
- The name of the person to receive the Mayor
- If a guest of the Mayor is invited
- What duties are requested of the Mayor for the event
- If a speech is required and its contents, including supporting information on the organisation
- Whether the press have been invited to the event
- Any other relevant information

Once an invitation has been properly accepted, it should not be cancelled unless there is an extreme emergency. All engagements are important, no matter how small. Organisers often put in a lot of effort to make their events successful and

the Mayor's role in promoting their activity is vital, it is not acceptable to "change your mind" if another invitation is more to the Mayor's liking. The Mayor should attend punctually, wearing the chain as appropriate. The timing of the event will have been taken into consideration when completing the protocol form. The Mayor should endeavour to arrive on time at the agreed place.

The number of engagements fulfilled by a Mayor is not an indication of quality. If the Mayor wishes to propose a visit then this must first be raised with the Town Council Officer before the organisation is contacted. The Mayor should not attend commercial functions where their name might be used for advertising purposes, except in cases where they are clearly for the benefit of the Town.

The Deputy Mayor

In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is entitled to the Mayor's right of precedence within the town, although the Deputy wears their own chain, not those of the Mayor. It therefore follows that:

- Invitations to a function should not be sent to (or solicited by) a Deputy Mayor. The Deputy Mayor should not attend functions in their own right, only when deputising for the Mayor.
- All invitations should be sent for consideration to the Mayor and if the Mayor cannot attend, it may be appropriate to "pass down" an invitation.
- It is not appropriate for the Deputy Mayor to be invited to a function in their own right, unless it is as a private individual. If there is any doubt, the invitation should be shown to the Town Council Office for advice on how or if to accept.

Robes, Chains & Badges of Office

The Mayors of the great majority of Towns and Boroughs wear a robe of office on ceremonial occasions, the majority wearing either a black robe with gold embellishments (customary for Lord Mayors) or a scarlet robe trimmed with fur. There is some debate in civic offices as to whether the fur on robes should be real or fake, which is a matter for each Council to decide. (Lowestoft Town Council's previous Mayor robe was trimmed with fur. This robe is no longer used and the current robes, commissioned in 2021, do not have fur).

The Chain and Badge are universally worn with the robes. The hat most generally worn with robes at outdoor ceremonies is a black tricorne hat with red and gold embellishment. A lace jabot is also usually worn at the neck.

Each Council will have its own historical reasons for its dress code. The important point to note is that the dignity of the office is maintained and that the use of the robe is not overdone and only used for ceremonial occasions.

The Mayor should not wear the civic insignia in another area without express permission of that Council.

Civic chains should never be worn with a military uniform. However, a Mayor who is a member of the clergy may wear full canonicals with the chain over the gown. Similarly, the chain may be worn over academic dress.

When wearing official robe and hat, the Mayor should remove the hat when:

- acknowledging salutes;
- during the playing of the National Anthem;
- in the presence of a member of the Royal Family.

During march pasts, the Mayor should remove and replace the hat:

- as each section passes the salute;
- when the Colours pass; or
- on an inspection when the Mayor passes the Colours.

The Mayor will be advised by Officers when the robes and/or chain is required for an event hosted by Lowestoft Town Council. It is standard practice for the Town Mayor of Lowestoft to wear the robe and chain on the following occasions:

- Remembrance Sunday
- Holocaust Memorial Day

The Mayor may wear the Chain of Office at any event they are invited to attend, as long as it has been requested by the organisers. However, permission must be

obtained from the appropriate Council to wear the Civic Chain if in another town/parish.

Robes are also worn by the Deputy Mayor in most Towns/Boroughs, as is a chain of office. The rules for wearing the Robe and Chain for the Mayor, also apply to the Deputy Mayor.

Many argue that medals, other than civic badges, should not, in any circumstances, be worn on civic robes, whilst others argue that medals should be worn on all ceremonial occasions. The most frequent compromise is that medals are not worn on robes except when attending robed at Remembrance Sunday or other commemorative services, when full medals (not miniatures) should be worn.

Chain & Badge (Insignia) – Safe Custody Rules

The Mayoral Insignia is valued at (to be confirmed) and is of great historical importance to the Town. It is important that the insignia is used and seen by the public on appropriate occasions, but it is also vital that they are protected for future generations.

- When not in use, the insignia must carefully stored in a secure location.
- Due to the age of the insignia, it must be handled with great care and attention.
- The insignia **must not** be left in an unattended vehicle.
- The insignia, unless being worn, should be kept in the case provided by the Council and not left unattended.
- The insignia must not be loaned or placed in the custody of any other person other than an appropriate officer of the Town Council.
- No attempt should be made to clean or repair the insignia. Any damage or wear and tear must be reported to an Officer of the Town Council as soon as possible.
- The Mayor/Consort/Deputy Mayor must inform an Officer of the Town Council immediately if the Chain or Badge of Office are lost, mislaid, stolen, or otherwise missing.

Robes – Safe Custody Rules

Please ensure the following rules are observed.

- When not in use the Robes must be carefully stored in a secure location.
- The Robes **must not** be left in an unattended vehicle.
- The Robes must not be loaned or placed in the custody of any other person other than an appropriate Officer of the Town Council.

- No attempt should be made to clean, repair, or alter the robes. Any damage or wear and tear must be reported to an Officer of the Town Council as soon as possible.
- The Mayor/Deputy Mayor must inform the Council Offices immediately if the Robes are damaged, lost, mislaid, stolen, or otherwise missing.

Clothing Guidelines

Advice on forms of address will be offered by the Town Council Officers for each civic engagement if it is not clear from the invitation or the engagement form, however the following is suggested as a guide.

Most civic engagements attended throughout the year will usually require casual dress (for example jacket, trousers, shirt, and tie in the case of gentlemen and jacket, dress/skirt/trousers, and blouse for ladies). However, there will be a few civic engagements where lounge suit/dinner jacket, short cocktail dress/long dress is required.

It is traditional for ladies to wear a hat for church services however it is entirely up to you. For evening wear, it is advisable for ladies to wear evening dress, this can be knee length however long dresses are occasionally worn.

The general advice for engagements is to dress “up” rather than “down”. Civic occasions should be regarded similar to a wedding.

Making Speeches

A

Mayor will often be required to make a public speech.

As Mayor, you will need to consider at the beginning of the year the style, length, and willingness to speak at functions.

Speeches will come across much better if:

- They are written in your own words.
- If you have read the speech through, practised it aloud and generally familiarised yourself with it. This also helps to put you at ease which will lead to better clarity and delivery.

You are an ambassador for the Council and so it is important that you make the best impression possible at all public engagements. If you feel you are lacking in background information for a particular engagement, ask the Town Council Officers to do more research for you.

Of course, the Town Council Office will assist you in any way possible either by obtaining information on the subject, typing any speeches drafted by the Mayor or even writing speeches for you.

Most speeches will be of thanks or welcome. If you are required to make a speech on the work of the Council, this must be limited to factual information which will be provided by the Town Clerk. Speeches must always avoid political or controversial subjects as the Mayor speaks on behalf of the Council as a corporate body, not on their own feelings or priorities.

Planning Mayoral Events

As well as attending engagements, the Mayor may also wish to hold their own events to raise funds for their chosen charity or charities, although there is no obligation to do so.

The Mayor will need to decide at the beginning of their year what sort of event or events they wish to hold. Whatever the event serious consideration needs to be given to:

- The likely net benefit to the Charity.
- How many people will support the event by buying tickets.
- The costs of running the event, including taxes.
- The people who will assist you prior to and at the event.

Each year, in addition to any charity events, it is customary for the Mayor to hold the following;

- **Civic Service** – a church service normally held on the first Sunday afternoon in October and attended by Civic Guests, family, friends, and various bodies/organisations. A reception for all invited guests is held afterwards at the Town Hall (expenses for this are usually funded by the Council in the annual budget and not from the Mayor's Allowance). Of course, the Mayor may wish to hold this service on another Sunday during the year.

Mayoral Allowance

The Local Government Act 1972 states that -

“A Parish Council may pay the Chairman for the purpose of enabling them to meet the expenses of their office such allowance as the Council think reasonable.” (Section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1972.)

There is no set formula for deciding the level of the civic allowance and Mayoral allowances vary dramatically across the country, with some small Councils paying large allowances and other Councils expecting the Mayor to meet all expenses of the office, including personal hospitality, civic hospitality and civic gifts, whilst others may draw upon other Council funds to meet these expenses.

What Can the Allowance Be Used For?

The Local Government Act 1972 does not stipulate the type or category of expenditure for which the civic allowance may be used by the Mayor, except that it is for meeting the “expenses of their office”. There is no universally accepted list of items “acceptable” for purchase out of the Mayoral allowance, however, some of the more general items may include:

Mileage and car parking costs; church service collections; raffle tickets at events; flag day flags, poppies; sending flowers; personal hospitality (including lunches and dinners); childcare expenses; one-off events held by the Mayor.

Lowestoft Town Council does not set a Mayoral Allowance, instead we permit Mayors and Deputy Mayors to claim back on expenses accrued from travel for civic events outside of Lowestoft.

Civic List

The “Civic List” is a list of names and addresses which have been compiled over the years, and is used when sending out invitations and other Civic related matters.

The list is not available to the public, although on very rare occasions a request can be made by a dignitary or organisation to use it for a forthcoming event.

The list is made up as follows;

- Members and Officers of the Council
- Surviving past Mayor of the Town
- Local Police and Fire Officer
- Mayor’s/Chairman of surrounding Towns and Districts
- Civic Guests, including recipient of The Freedom of the Town
- Local Member of Parliament

Acceptance of Gifts

In the course of the duties of being Mayor, it is likely that gifts will be offered to the Mayor either as a personal gift or for the Council in general. You should treat with extreme caution any offer of gift, favour or hospitality that is made to you. The person or organisation making the offer may be doing, or seeking to do, business with the Council or may be applying to the District Council for planning permission or some other kind of decision.

There are no hard or fast rules about the acceptance or refusal of hospitality or tokens of goodwill. For example, working lunches may be a proper way of doing business, provided that they are approved by Council and that no extravagance is involved. Likewise, it may be reasonable for a member to represent the Council at a social function or event organised by outside persons and bodies.

You are personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in local government. Gifts of more than a nominal value of £5 should be accepted on behalf of the Council and handed over to the Mayoral Secretary for storage or disposal. If there is something that a Mayor wishes to retain personally, the item should be valued and the Mayor pay the appropriate figure to the Council.

For a full guidance on accepting gifts, please refer to the Code of Conduct.

Further advice on Gifts and hospitality can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

Giving

Occasionally the Mayor may wish to present a gift to a visiting dignitary or when attending a celebration (for example a resident who is celebrating their 100th Birthday). The decision of whether to purchase such gifts, and the appropriate budget allocation, would be discussed by the relevant Committee.

Flag Flying

The flying of flags may be governed by local custom but guidelines are also adhered to in respect of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport who issue instructions for the hoisting of the Union and other Flags. It should also be noted that Remembrance Sunday the Union Flag is flown at full-mast and not at half-mast.

Occasions on which flags are to be flown at half-mast

- From the announcement of the death until after the funeral of the Sovereign, except on Royal Proclamation when they are hoisted right up
- The funerals of members of the Royal Family, subject to special commands from His Majesty in each case
- The funerals of Prime Ministers and Ex-Prime Ministers of Great Britain.
- Other occasions by special command of His Majesty

Flying of other flags

During the year there are several times when flags may be flown from the Town Hall, these include.

- Commonwealth Day (10th March)
- Armed Forces Day (28th June)
- Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal Launch (October/November)

The Town Council may decide on other occasions when it would be appropriate to fly flags from the Town Hall.

Coat of Arms – Brief History

A Coat of arms is a heraldic device that was developed in northern Europe in the mid-twelfth century and was used by the monarch, knights and aristocracy for identification purposes. A coat of arms consists of a shield (which bears the iconography) topped by the crest (the three-dimensional device borne on top of a helmet resting on a two-toned wreath) and a motto displayed either below the shield or above the crest.

The Arms of Lowestoft were granted to the Borough Council in 1913. The blazon (description) reads as follows:

“Argent on a Chevron Sable between in chief an Antique Crown between two Roses Gules each Rose charged with another Rose Argent all barbed and seeded proper and in base a Sun issuant Or three Lowestoft China Plates all proper” and “On a Wreath of the Colours a demi figure representing St. Margaret holding in the hand a Pearl all proper”. With the motto “Point du jour”.

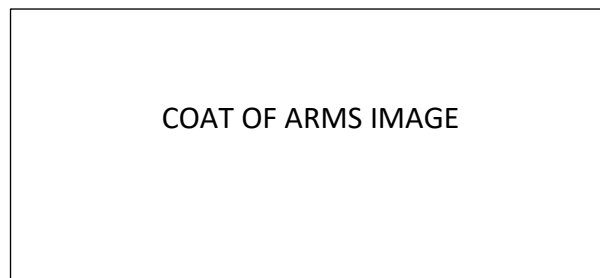
The demi figure featured on the coat of arms is St Margaret, the patron saint of childbirth and pregnant women, to whom the parish church of Lowestoft is dedicated.

The plates represent the Lowestoft Porcelain Factory, which was established in Bell Lane (crown Street) in 1757 and operated until 1802.

The rising sun at the base refers to Lowestoft’s location, as the most easterly town of the country it is the first place to see the sunrise. “Point du jour” translates to “daybreak”.

When the Borough Council was abolished in 1974 the Coat of Arms fell into disuse.

In 2023, Lowestoft Town Council made the decision to appeal to the College of Arms for the Coat of Arms to be transferred over from the Borough Council. This transfer was finalised in 2024.



Town Insignia – Brief History

The term “civic insignia” refers to the formal robes, chains of office, mace, swords, badges of office and other ceremonial possessions of the local authority. It should be noted that whilst ‘regalia’ is often used to denote these items the correct term is ‘insignia’ as regalia is defined as “the Crown, Sceptre, and the Cross, and other jewels and ornaments used at a Coronation”.

The history of robes and gowns dates back to biblical times where one of the earliest records of the use of robes as a symbol of authority appears in The Book of Exodus, Chapter 28, where God commanded the use of vestments for the priests.

Mayoral robes and civic insignia are a tradition dating back to the 14th century and served as a symbol of their authority in upholding law and order in their districts. In the Medieval period the colour red was expensive to produce and therefore it indicated wealth, thus it was often the colour used for the Mayoral robes.

The Town of Lowestoft owns various items of insignia, below I have given a brief description of each item.

Mayor’s Robe, Tricorn and Jabot – The robe is of red cloth with gold, black and blue trim. The tricorn is trimmed with red and gold. Purchased in 2021.

Mayor’s Robe, Tricorn and Jabot – The robe is of red cloth with gold, black and blue trim. The tricorn is trimmed with blue and gold. Purchased in 2021.

Mayor’s Consort Badge – Gold plating and enamel colouring with the Town Council logo central on the badge. Burgandy neck ribbon. Purchased in 2024.

Deputy Mayor’s Consort Badge – Gold plating and enamel colouring with the Town Council logo central on the badge. Turquoise Peacock Blue neck ribbon. Purchased in 2024.

Mayor’s Chain of Office – Acquired in 2017.

Deputy Mayor’s Chain of Office – Acquired in 2017.

The Town of Lowestoft - Brief History

Lowestoft's history likely dates back to the mid-9th to 10th century as the name Lowestoft has Old Scandinavian roots, often translated to 'Hloover's toft' or 'the homestead of Hloover'. However, it is likely that there was already a pre-existing settlement.

Some of the earliest signs of settlement in Britain have been found here, with flint tools tracing human habitation back 700,000 years.

Lowestoft is recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book as "Lothuwistoft", having sixteen households in three families, the manor of which formed part of the King's holding in the Hundred of Lothingland.

By 1212, Lowestoft had gained manorial status with authority over another holding as Beccles was listed in the Book of Fees as royal demesne. There seems to have been no resident lord, and the manor was instead managed by a bailiff. In the Middle Ages, Lowestoft became an important fishing town with its trade, particularly in herring, continuing until the 20th century.

In 1308 Lowestoft was granted a market and fair.

In 1376 Edward III granted the manor and hundred to John de Surrey, later passed to Michael de la Pole during the reign on Henry IV (1399-1413) and remained with his family for a century.

Henry VI granted a market charter to William de la Pole in December 1445, which gave Lowestoft the rights to a weekly Wednesday market, two week-long fairs centre on the feasts of Saints Philip and James (3rd May) and Michaelmas (29th September), and the privileges of a market town. This brought further wealth to Lowestoft, as attested by the rebuilding and enlarging of the parish church of St Margaret in the later fifteenth century.

After the execution of Edmund de la Pole for treason in 1513, the hundred was forfeited to the crown and Henry VIII passed Lowestoft to Edmund Jernegan of Somerleyton Hall.

Prior to the establishment of the Borough Council, Lowestoft was under the jurisdiction of the Town Improvement Commissioners, with membership consisting of landowners and merchants from the town, who were empowered by an Act of Parliament. This group succeeded the clergy and churchwardens who had previously performed their duties.

Lowestoft was granted a Borough status, marked by a ceremony, at a public meeting on 29th August 1885, with the first municipal elections held 1 November 1885, where Mr William Youngman was elected as the Town's first Mayor.

The Town Hall (Civic Building)

Civic and ecclesiastical activity has been carried out on the site of the Town Hall since the 16th century, where a building dated to approximately 1570 accommodated a market cross for corn-trading and a ‘chapel-of-ease’ for worship during the winter months. This civic and religious use continued from the 16th to the 17th century where the building was variously known as the Town Chapel, the Town Chamber and the Town House. In 1698 a new Town House was built with a Corn Cross on the ground floor, the Town Chamber above, where parish business was discussed, and an adjoining Chapel.

The Town Hall as it currently stands was built between 1857-1860 to the designs of J L Clemence and opened on 6th March 1860. It was built in the Italianate style, a 19th century phase of Classical architecture that drew inspiration from 16th century Italian Renaissance architecture.

The building was later altered in 1869-1873 by W Oldham Chambers with the improvement works, including the removal of the porch and the rebuilding of the High Street façade, eventually costing £4,000. With the High Street widened in 1899, much of the Town Hall was demolished, rebuilt and extended in 1899-1905, with only the Council Chamber being retained.

The Council Chamber is located on the first floor and is the only surviving aspect of J L Clemence’s designs, containing the original stained-glass window given by Sir Morton Peto to commemorate the Anglo-French alliance against Russia during the Crimean War. This window depicts St George and St Denis, separated by a panel depicting the Field of the Cloth of Gold. There are two small windows that commemorate Peto’s links with Lowestoft.

Housed in the upper section is the Town Clock, which houses the bell recast during the 18th century from the 1644 original. This bell would toll a curfew at eight in the evening each night, according to an old custom started in the 17th century following a major fire in the town.

The Town Hall was vacated by Waveney District Council and has been unoccupied since 2015. It is a Grade II listed building and there is an ongoing refurbishment project to re-open the Town Hall as a multi-functional and inclusive centre for the community and visitors, and the seat of Lowestoft Town Council.

The Town Population

The first known population census in 1801 recorded a population of 2,332. The latest 2021 census recorded a population of 71,327. Lowestoft is the seconded largest town in Suffolk and is represented in Parliament as the Lowestoft constituency.