



Okehampton Town Council

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Co-Option Policy

The Co-option of a Town Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken the following procedure will be followed by Okehampton Town Council:

- 1) On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office at West Devon Borough Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of Co-option, the Town Clerk will advertise the vacancy for a minimum of 4 weeks on the Council noticeboard, Facebook page, newsletter and website, and place an advert in the local press.
- 2) Applicants for co-option will be asked to:
 - a) submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form,
 - b) confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules, by completing an Eligibility statement.
- 3) Copies of the applicant's application form will be circulated to all Councillors with the agenda prior to the meeting of the Full Council when the Co-option will be considered. Confidential information, with the exception of the applicant's name, will be redacted.
- 4) Applicants will be sent a copy of the Full Council Agenda of the meeting when the Co-option will be considered and invited to attend if they wish to do so.
- 5) **At the meeting** when co-option is to be considered the following process will be followed:
 - a) The Mayor will explain the co-option process
 - b) Any Member who personally knows a candidate must declare an interest and leave the room for the duration of the item of business.
 - c) Candidates are invited to give a presentation explaining their reasons for applying for co-option, maximum of two minutes, followed by a short opportunity for questions by Members.
 - d) Candidates are asked to leave the room. Discussion about the applications will take place within an open part of the Council meeting without intervention from the candidates or public.
 - e) A written vote is taken (see voting procedure at 6 below)
 - f) After voting has concluded candidates will be invited back into the room and the Chairman will declare the outcome. The number of votes will not be disclosed.
 - g) The Town Clerk explains paperwork is required to be completed including the Declaration of Acceptance Office following which the successful candidate will become a Councillor. The successful candidate is encouraged to remain at the meeting as a member of the public, seated in the public area and leaving for any confidential items of business.

- 6) **The voting process** will be according to the statutory requirements, in that, a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting.
- a) Councillors shall vote by written ballot.
 - b) Candidates will be asked to leave the room for any discussion and the voting process (see 5) d)). If there is more than one vacancy, there will be a separate vote for each vacancy.
 - c) Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken.
This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting. This includes a tie of candidates with the lowest number of votes, for example 12 voting councillors for 3 candidates results in votes equalling 6, 3 and 3.