



Councillor Co-option Procedure

Adopted 23/11/2020

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1.0	16/07/2018	01/07/2020
2.0	23/11/2020	01/07/2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A casual vacancy occurs¹ when a councillor fails to deliver his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time, a councillor resigns, a councillor dies, a councillor is disqualified by virtue of a criminal conviction² or a councillor fails to attend meetings for six consecutive months without the authority of the Council.
- 1.2. For the avoidance of doubt, a meeting can be either physical or virtual.

2. Notice of Vacancy

- 2.1. If a vacancy arises within six months of an election, the Council can agree to wait until the elections to fill the vacancy.
- 2.2. In all other instances, the following process must be followed:
 - 2.2.1. The Clerk will complete a Notice of Vacancy form stating who and what has caused the vacancy, e.g. resignation, the date of the notice, the deadline for electors to call a by-election and the address of the Returning Officer at TWBC.
 - 2.2.2. The form is displayed on the notice board and the Council's website.
 - 2.2.3. An email is sent to elections@tunbridgewells.gov.uk to inform TWBC that a vacancy has occurred with a copy of the Notice of Vacancy.
- 2.3. TWBC will notify the Council if a by-election has been called. If not, the Council will be entitled to fill the vacancy by Co-option.
- 2.4. If a by-election is called by 10 or more electors, then TWBC will be responsible for the election process.

3. Co-option Process

- 3.1. An advert should be displayed on the Council notice board and website asking electors to apply for the role of councillor.
- 3.2. An application form and person specification (see appendix 1) should be available from the Parish Office or the website. Application forms should be submitted to the Clerk.
- 3.3. The Clerk will review all applications to ensure that candidates are qualified to apply for the role.
- 3.4. Informal interviews with the Parish Council Chairman and Vice Chairman will be arranged with all qualified candidates to ensure they are suitable for co-option by assessment against the criteria in the approved person specification.
- 3.5. If they are assessed as suitable candidates, they will be invited to attend a Council meeting for a formal interview, where the decision to co-opt the candidate/s will be made. Copies of the Applicant's application form will be shared with the Council at the same time as the other meeting papers wherever possible.

¹ Local Government Act 1972, section 87

² Local Government Act 2000, section 79 and Localism Act 2011 (England), section 34

4. Interview

- 4.1. Candidates will be invited to attend a Council meeting and answer questions from Councillors in a confidential session. After they have been interviewed they will be asked to leave the meeting.
- 4.2. The person co-opted must receive a majority of votes of those councillors present at the meeting.
- 4.3. The Clerk will inform candidates of the Council's decision in writing after the meeting.
- 4.4. Successful candidates will be invited to join the Council from the next Council meeting when they will sign the declaration of acceptance of office.

APPENDIX 1

Councillor Person Specification

COMPETENCY	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Relevant knowledge, Education, Professional Qualifications & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific Vocational training or professional qualification (e.g. accountant, teacher, surveyor, architect)
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid interest in local matters. • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills. • Ability to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. • Ability and willingness to use personal IT equipment to receive emails and documents for review and respond timeously. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff. • Ability and willingness to work with the council’s partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities). • Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reading and analytical skills • Ability to work under pressure • Knowledge of HR, procurement, contract management, financial control or risk management and compliance, public relations, grounds maintenance, allotments and/or • Experience of working in another public body or not for profit organisation and/or • Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/ interest groups and/or • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities and/or. • Experience of delivering presentations and/or. • Experience of working with the media and/or. • Experience in financial control/budgeting and/or • Experience of staff management
Other requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends. • Flexible • Enthusiastic 	