



GREAT DUNMOW

TOWN COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Date For Review
1	03.10.24	FC.03.10.24.85ii	October 2027

Introduction

If within 14 days of the public advertisement of a casual vacancy in the office of councillor (per LGA 1972 s.86, s.87, s.89, s.232) a poll has not been requested (per Local Elections (Parishes and Communities)(England and Wales) Rules 2006 and per Representation of the People Act 1983 s.36), the Council must fill the vacancy by co-option to membership of the Town Council in accordance with s.5(5) and 5(6) of the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, (unless that vacancy occurs within the six months before the day upon which that councillor would regularly have retired, in which case the Town Council may fill the vacancy by co-option to membership of the Town Council but is not obligated so to do).

Due and fair consideration will be given to advice and guidance as provided by bodies such as (but not limited to) the National Association for Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and the Essex Association for Local Councils (EALC).

Great Dunmow Town Council will follow a process which is fair, open and transparent and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Qualifying Criteria

Individuals must meet the eligibility criteria in accordance with the LGA 1972, s79 to wit, must:

- Be a British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, or citizen of a qualifying EU country or an EU citizen with retained rights;

AND

- On the 'relevant date'¹ be 18 years of age or over;

ALSO

- Be a local government elector for the Council area for which you want to stand on the 'relevant date' **OR**
- Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the Council area during the whole 12 months preceding that day **OR**
- Had your principal or only place of work in the Council area during that same period **OR**
- Have resided in the Council area during that whole 12-month period **OR**

¹ Relevant Date – for the process of co-option the relevant date is deemed as being the date on which the application is submitted by the applicant

- Have lived within 3 miles (4.8km) of the Council area for the whole of the 12 months preceding the 'relevant date'

Great Dunmow Town Council will seek and encourage applications from any individual meeting the qualifying criteria as detailed above.

Advertising the Co-option:

The Town Council will advertise and promote the vacancy for co-option as follows:

- On Town Council public notice boards
- On the Town Council website
- Using a range of social media platforms
- Local press
- Via industry partners such as EALC, NALC and UDC

The co-option notice / advert will include the following details:

- the method by which applications can be made
- the closing date for all applications
- a contact point to obtain more information (ordinarily this will be the Town Clerk)
- details of how to find further information either electronically or in paper format
- Person Specification for a Co-Opted Councillor (Appendix A).

Applying for Co-Option

1. Candidates will be requested to complete and sign a written Co-option Application Form including a confirmation of eligibility statement – per Appendix B - failure to complete which may render the application invalid. The Council will have due consideration to the Equality Act 2010 and by discretion, may allow applications to be completed by third parties and/or submitted by alternative means.
2. Candidates will be provided with an information pack, providing further details of Great Dunmow Town Council's activities and outlining the expectations of the role of Town Councillor.
3. Completed applications must be submitted to the Town Clerk before noon on a date no later than 7 calendar days before the date of the Full Council meeting at which applications are to be considered. The precise deadlines for submission will be included in the information pack. Late applications will not be accepted.
4. Following the closing date for applications, all eligible candidates will be invited to attend the Full Council meeting at which co-options will be considered.
5. If candidates are unable to attend this meeting, their application will still be considered in their absence. No alternative date or time for a

meeting will be arranged.

6. All Members will receive extracts of candidate applications which will be considered as strictly confidential papers as they will likely contain personal information relating to the candidate.
7. The co-option process will be determined in a public session of Council and a specific agenda item will be set aside for applicants to make a brief, verbal presentation to Council in support of their application. A maximum of three minutes will be allowed per candidate.
8. Members may ask questions of the candidates following their presentations.
9. Following the conclusion of all presentations, Members present at the meeting will proceed to the vote which will be in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders. Standing Orders currently advise that voting must be by a show of hands.
10. Voting will be by individual candidate in alphabetical order and each Member will have one vote each.
11. If a candidate is a relative or other familiar of a Town Councillor, that Councillor may declare a prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting
12. Where more than one candidate is presented for co-option to any one vacancy, in order to be successful the candidate must receive an absolute majority vote from those Councillors present.²
13. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and not one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again.
14. This process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.
15. In accordance with Standing Orders, the Chair may exercise his/her right to use a casting vote.

² In accordance with LGA 1972, Sch 12, para 39. An absolute majority is where the number of votes cast to any preferred candidate receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, i.e. – 15 votes cast, an absolute majority would require a candidate to receive 8 votes with the other 7 being split amongst other candidates.

16. If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.
17. The Council must, if there is no election called, co-opt to vacancies once advertised (except in the case of the vacancy arising within six months of the regular retirement date of that councillor) and therefore in the case of a single candidate being presented for co-option when one or more vacancies have been advertised, that candidate must be co-opted if he or she meets the eligibility criteria.
18. Likewise in cases where the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of vacancies, the Council must co-opt those candidates to vacancies once advertised (except in the case of the vacancies arising within six months of the regular retirement dates of those councillors), if they meet the eligibility criteria.
19. Successfully co-opted candidates become Councillors, with immediate effect with the same rights and obligations as other Members, including the obligation to abide by the Council's adopted Code of Conduct, to be appointed to committees and as representative to local external organisations.
20. Co-opted Members are required, in the presence of the Proper Officer or a Member of the Council, to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before or at the first meeting of the Council after his or her co-option (or before or at a later meeting if permitted by the Council) which must be delivered to the Council before or at the first meeting of the Council after his or her co-option (or before or at a later meeting if permitted by the Council).
21. Failure to deliver the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the specified date will result in the seat immediately becoming vacant once more.
22. In order to avoid newly co-opted Councillors voting under misapprehension upon proposals for which they have not been privy to the supporting information, the co-option process will always be the last order of business at the meeting where the co-option is to take place.
23. Any application can be considered in the candidate(s) absence.
24. As soon as practicable following their co-option, any newly co-opted members will be invited to attend an Induction and Training session with the Town Clerk and/or other officers. This should take place where possible before the next Full Council meeting

Appendix A – Person Specification For a Co-Opted Town Councillor

Competence	Essential	Desirable
Personal attributes	Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community and forward thinking.	Can bring new skills, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council
Experience, skills, knowledge and ability	• A good team player • Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects • Solid interest in local matters • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community • Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others' views and accept majority decisions • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly • 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, etc.) • Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training	• Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body • Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/interest groups. • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities • Experience of delivering presentations
Circumstances	Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends.	

Appendix B – Co-Option Application Form

First Name	
Surname	
Address	
Home Tel No:	
Mobile Tel No:	
Email address:	

Please detail below why you consider you would be the best candidate for this vacancy. Points to cover could include the following:

- Length of residence in the area if appropriate
- Membership and involvement with any community associations within the town or elsewhere
- Particular interests in, and concerns relating to, the town
- Do you have any professional or work-related experience which could be utilised for the benefit of the town?

If you wish to provide additional written information in support of your application this will be copied to all Councillors and treated in strict confidence. Please continue overleaf or on a separate piece of paper if necessary.

Please also confirm that you are:

- A British subject or a citizen of the Commonwealth, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, or citizen of a qualifying EU country or an EU citizen with retained rights

AND

- That on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the date upon which this application is submitted) you will be 18 years of age or over

ALSO

- That you will be a local government elector for the Council area for which you want to stand on the 'relevant date' **OR**
- That you have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the Council area during the whole 12 months preceding that day **OR**
- Had your principal or only place of work in the Council area during that same period **OR**
- Have resided in the Council area during the whole of that 12-month period **OR**
- Have lived within 3 miles (4.8km) of the Council area for the whole of the 12 months preceding the 'relevant date'

You cannot become a councillor if you:

- are subject to a bankruptcy order or interim order
- have, within five years before the day of application, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a prison sentence for a period of over three months
- work for the Town Council
- Have been convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices
- Have been convicted for the failure to register or declare disclosable interests under the Localism Act 2011

I confirm that the information as given in this application is true and accurate and that I meet the qualifying criteria to become a Town Councillor:

Signed

Dated.....