

Adopted Council 12.6.2023.

Sevenoaks Town Council – Co Option Policy & Procedure

Introduction

1. Co-option is the process by which a parish / town council selects a new Councillor when a vacancy exists on that Council that has not been filled by an electoral process.
2. Although the process for co-option is not prescribed in law, the Society of Local Council Clerks and the National Association of Local Councils provide best practice advice and guidelines, and this has been considered in this policy.
3. It is especially important that all applicants be treated alike so that the arrangements are seen as open, fair, and transparent.
4. The Co-option process to be used by Sevenoaks Town Council is as follows:
 - 4.1. Whenever the need for Co-option arises, Sevenoaks Town Council will seek and encourage applications from anyone in the town who is eligible to stand as a Town Councillor.
 - 4.2. Councillors or parishioners can legally approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for Co-option.
5. The Co-option policy will be reviewed every four years.

Co-Option Policy

6. The advertisement to Co-opt will include:
 - 6.1 the method by which applications can be made
 - 6.2 the closing date for all applications, at least two weeks' notice to be given.
 - 6.3 a contact point to obtain more information
 - 6.4 show that further information is available electronically via the website, to include application forms and information about the roles and responsibilities of the council.
7. Existing Town Councillors may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s).
8. Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

9. Those seeking Co-option should apply to be Co-opted in writing to the Chief Executive / Town Clerk completing the prescribed form which will set out their reasons for standing and a confirmation that they meet the eligibility criteria. This must be supplied by the closing date for applications which will be at least 14 days prior to the decision meeting.
10. Eligibility of the candidate will be confirmed by Sevenoaks Town Council's Chief Executive / Town Clerk.

To qualify to be eligible to be a Town Councillor you must answer yes to the following.	
Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of a member of the European Union Country?	Yes / No
Are you 18 or over?	Yes / No
Are you on the electoral register for Sevenoaks parish?	Yes / No
To qualify to be eligible to be a Town Councillor you must answer yes to one of the following:	
Have you lived either in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	Yes / No
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council for at least the last year?	Yes / No
Have you had your only or main place of work in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council for at least the last year?	Yes / No
To qualify to be eligible to be a Town Councillor you must answer no to the following.	
Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	Yes / No
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	Yes / No
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a Member of a local authority?	Yes / No

11. All eligible candidates will be invited, by letter, to attend the next full Sevenoaks Town Council meeting following the application deadline. If candidates are unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged. The Co-option will still take place and voting on this vacancy will be subsequently based on this meeting and the candidate application form.
12. All Town Councillors will receive copies of candidate applications, along with the summons to attend the next full Town Council meeting following the application deadline. Candidate names will be displayed on the agenda of the meeting at which the Co-option will occur. No other details apart from the candidates names will be displayed. Candidate applications are strictly confidential.
13. An agenda item will be set aside for candidates to make a brief verbal presentation to Town Councillors, outlining their relevant skills and experience. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes. After presentations Town Councillors may ask candidates questions if considered necessary. These presentations and questions will be in public open session.

14. The Mayor will then request those Town Councillors present to nominate a candidate to become a Town Councillor. A Co-option to the Town Council is by Council resolution and require a proposer and seconder to progress to the voting stage.
15. The Mayor will then place the names of nominated candidates in alphabetical order and proceed to vote.
16. A current Town Councillor may request that a signed ballot is used. The Chief Executive / Town Clerk will prepare voting slips for this purpose.
17. Only Town Councillors present in person at the meeting may vote upon a person to fill the vacancy. Town Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
18. If a candidate is a relative of a Town Councillor, that Town Councillor should declare a prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting.
19. A successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote by those Town Councillors present.
20. It follows that 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. This process must if necessary be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.
21. The Mayor has the casting vote if necessary.

Sevenoaks Town Council Co-Option Form

Sevenoaks Town Council Co-Opted Councillor Person Specification

Personal Attributes

- Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community
- Forward thinking
- Can bring a skill, expertise, or key local knowledge to the Council.

Experience, Skills, Knowledge, and Ability

- Ability to listen constructively
- A good team player
- Ability to pick up and contribute to 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 point of view and accept majority decisions.
- Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly
- Ability and willingness to work closely with other Councillors and to maintain good working relationships with all Councillors and staff
- Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training
- Basic knowledge of issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities.

Circumstances

- Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council, normally Monday evenings and or meetings of other local authorities and organisations as may be necessary.

Town Council Offices
Bradbourne Vale Road
Sevenoaks Kent TN13 3QG

tel: 01732 459 953 fax: 01732 742 577
email: council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk
web: sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Town Clerk

SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM

Full name	
Home address including postcode	
Telephone number	
Mobile Number	
Email	

LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING A TOWN COUNCILLOR

To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to the questions below:

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of a member of the European Union Country?	Yes / No
Are you 18 or over?	Yes / No
Are you on the electoral register for Sevenoaks parish?	Yes / No

To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to one of the following questions:

Have you lived either in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	Yes / No
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council for at least the last year?	Yes / No
Have you had your only or main place of work in the area covered by Sevenoaks Town Council for at least the last year?	Yes / No

To qualify you must be able to answer 'No' to all the questions below:

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	Yes / No
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	Yes / No
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a Member of a local authority?	Yes / No

Please briefly outline why you are interested in becoming a Sevenoaks Town Councillor?

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Please tell us something about the life experience and skills you will bring to the Council, for example, work in the voluntary or charitable sector.

What would you like to achieve as a Councillor?

Are there any questions you would like to ask the council about your application or the role of councillor?

Signed Dated