

Louth Town Council

CO-OPTION POLICY

1. Introduction

The preferred method of filling any vacancy is by election. However, if the requisite numbers of requests for an election are not received by the District Council by the closing date (set by the District Council) or the vacancy arises within six-months of the next ordinary election, then co-option is used to fill a vacancy.

Co-option is the process by which the Town Council selects a new Councillor and it is done as an agenda item within a meeting.

The Town Council manages the process of co-option by itself and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure as set out below.

2. Procedure

Louth Town Council invites interested candidates to contact the Town Clerk in writing certifying that:

- a. They have read the background documentation available on the Council's website relating to the Council, the role of a Councillor and the co-option process
- b. They meet at least one of the qualifying criteria (see below)
- c. They do not meet any of the disqualifying criteria (see below)
- d. Explaining why they would like to join the Council
- e. What they could bring to the Council
- f. How they meet the Job Description/Person Specification.

Once applications have been processed, candidates who meet the criteria will be invited to attend a meeting for interview, as follows:

At the Council meeting:

- g. Candidates will be invited to verbally introduce themselves and expand on any previous experience, explain why they want to be a Councillor, what they might bring to the role, confirm how they meet the Job Description/Person Specification, confirm what they would like to achieve if they are successful and confirm whether they have any special skills which might be useful to the Council.
- h. Councillors will have the opportunity to view applications immediately prior to the meeting and ask questions of the candidates at the meeting. To ensure fairness, questions will be decided upon prior to interview and will be asked of each candidate.
- i. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of 5 minutes.
- j. 'Interviews' will not take place in front of other candidates seeking co-option.
- k. The successful candidate will be chosen by recorded vote of the Council.
- l. Councillors will have one vote only and should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated. Voting will then take place again for the remaining candidates until one person receives a majority.
- m. The Clerk will maintain an accurate record of all votes cast.
- n. The Town Council will pass a resolution confirming the name of the person to be co-opted and that person will be invited to sign a declaration of acceptance of office form.
- o. The successful candidate will then be declared co-opted to the Council and will be asked to join the meeting.

- p. The successful candidate will begin their term as a Councillor in their own right and is no different to any other member.

It should be noted that the Town Council is not obliged to select candidates who are interviewed for co-option. If the process is unsuccessful and a candidate fails to achieve a majority supporting vote that candidate will be duly informed of such and the Town Council will rerun the co-option process.

3. Qualifying Criteria

- a. Registered as a local government elector for the Parish on the current Electoral Register
- b. Has during the whole of the previous 12 months occupied as tenant or owner of any land or other premises in the Parish.
- c. His/her principal or only place of work in the previous 12 months has been in the Parish.
- d. Has resided either in the Parish or within 3 miles thereof during the whole of the previous 12 months.

4. Disqualifying Criteria

A person may be disqualified from being elected or being a member in the following ways:

- a. If he holds a paid office or other place of profit in the gift or disposal of the council or any committee or sub-committee thereof or under a company controlled by the council.
- b. Being subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order or a debt relief restrictions order.
- c. If he has within five years before the election or since his election been convicted in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to not less than three months imprisonment (whether suspended or not) without the option of a fine.
- d. If he is convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices; disclosable interests under the Localism Act 2011 (in England).