

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



## CO-OPTION POLICY

<b>Policy Number 44</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Date completed</b>	<b>Details of amendments</b>
1	February 2004	PR037.04.04
2.	GP 13.04.15	GP.70.04.15 Review and inclusion of process to apply for vacant positions.
3	FC 05.08.19	General review of policy and in particular procedures at the meeting – approved.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This policy sets out the procedures for the co-option of Councillors in both non-election (casual vacancies) and election years.

## **2.0 CO-OPTION**

2.1 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. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A Councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- A Councillor resigns;
- A Councillor dies;
- A Councillor becomes disqualified;
- A Councillor fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of a council committee or sub-committee

2.2 The Town Clerk is required to notify the District Council of the Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election.

If no election is called within the timeframe required, Uckfield Town Council is able to co-opt, and then the advertisement for this process will commence.

## **3.0 POLICY IN NON-ELECTION YEARS**

3.1 In the event of the need for co-option in a non-election year, the following process be undertaken:-

3.2 The Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing notices at various locations in the Town, on the Council's website, on social media and by placing an advertisement in a local paper. The closing date for nominations will be fourteen days from the date of the press advertisement.

3.3 The Clerk will require prospective candidates to:-

- complete a form providing confirmation that each candidate is both qualified and not disqualified from holding office,
- attend a meeting of the Full Council, and
- provide a one page 'manifesto' to assist Members in reaching a decision.

3.4 Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Town Councillor and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Town Council are not obliged to co-opt any Member, if it is felt that candidates are not suitable.

3.5 If necessary an extra meeting of the Town Council will be held to specifically consider the co-options.

- 3.6 In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain 50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting.
- 3.7 If an insufficient number of candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.
- 3.8 Prior to the co-option meeting, sitting Members may consider the vacant positions to be filled by co-option and may put themselves forward for any of these positions, removing themselves from some or all the positions they currently fill. No less than four weeks prior to the co-option meeting, each sitting Member will notify the Clerk of the positions they wish to vacate and the vacant positions for which they wish to apply. These vacated positions may in turn be filled by other sitting Members or the incoming co-opted Member(s).
- 3.9 In order to facilitate any possible exchanging of positions on committees, sub-committees, working groups or as representatives to outside bodies, no less than three weeks before the co-option meeting sitting Members and those candidates for co-option will be provided with a full list of the vacancies that will be available to be filled at the co-option meeting.
- 3.10 No less than two weeks before the co-option meeting sitting Members and those candidates for co-option will provide the Clerk with their priority list of the vacant places on committees, sub-committees and working groups they wish to fill, using the same process as that used for selection of places for committees, sub-committees and working groups at each Annual Statutory Meeting. Any vacancies arising for representatives to outside bodies will also be advised to the Clerk no less than two weeks before the co-option meeting and again, Members and those candidates for co-option will provide the Clerk with their preferences for such positions.
- 3.11 At the co-option meeting and following the co-option of the required number of new Members, the placement of sitting Members and co-opted Members for the vacancies notified will then be considered using the same format as that used at the Annual Statutory Meeting.

#### **4.0 POLICY IN ELECTION YEARS**

- 4.1 In the event of the need for co-option in an election year, the following process will be undertaken:-
- 4.2 If following the close of nominations at an Ordinary Election, there is a quorum of Elected Members, but some outstanding vacancies, the Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing notices at various locations in the Town, on the Council's website on social media and by placing an advertisement in a local paper.
- 4.3 The Clerk will require prospective candidates to:-
- complete a form providing confirmation that each candidate is both qualified and not disqualified from holding office,
  - attend a meeting of the Full Council and

- provide a one page 'manifesto' to assist Members in reaching a decision.
- 4.4 Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Town Councillor and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Town Council are not obliged to co-opt any Member, if it is felt that candidates are not suitable.
- 4.5 The closing date for nominations will be noon on the Monday after the election takes place and co-options will be considered at the first meeting of the Full Council following the election, (usually the Annual Statutory Meeting), and will be the first business to be considered after the Election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

## **5.0 AT THE CO-OPTION MEETING**

- 5.1. At the co-option meeting, candidates will have two minutes to introduce themselves to members, give information on their background and experience, and explain why they wish to become a member of Uckfield Town Council;
- 5.2 After presentations, members may ask candidates a few questions before proceeding to vote. *(If a candidate is unable to attend the meeting, this process will still take place and voting will subsequently be based on this meeting and the application form);*
- 5.3 The process will be carried out in the public session and there will be no private discussions between members prior to a vote being taken. However, where the Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial and the Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.
- 5.4 If a candidate is a relative of a Councillor, that Councillor should declare a prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting.

## **6.0 VOTING PROCEDURE**

- 6.1 As soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions, the council will proceed to a vote with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance (as defined in the Standing Orders) and a vote by a show of hands (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39). At the request of two Councillors, voting can be carried out by a signed ballot.
- 6.2 In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain 50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting.
- 6.3 Voting will be according to the agreed procedure in standing orders, namely:  
*'Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council 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. Any tie may be settled by the Chairman's casting vote.'*

6.4 After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate(s) duly elected.

**7.0 ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

7.1 The successful candidate must sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office before they can act as a councillor. The Register of Members Interests form must be completed within 28 days and the Clerk will forward a copy to the Monitoring Officer at the District Council.