

Dalton with Newton Town Council

Co-option Policy

Adopted:

Review Date:

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that vacancies on Dalton with Newton Town Council are filled in a fair, open and transparent manner through the co-option process where a vacancy has not been filled by election.

The Council is committed to encouraging public participation in local democracy and will seek to attract and appoint applicants who can contribute positively to the work of the Council and the community it serves.

2. Legislative Background

The co-option process is governed by the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 2006 and relevant local government legislation.

A vacancy may only be filled by co-option when:

- A casual vacancy has arisen;
- The required notice of vacancy has been published;
- The Electoral Services Officer has confirmed that no election has been requested within the statutory period; and
- The Council has been notified that it may proceed to fill the vacancy by co-option.

3. Eligibility

To be eligible for co-option, an applicant must:

- Be at least 18 years of age on the date of appointment;
- Be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; and
- Meet at least one of the following qualifications:

a) Be registered as a local government elector for the parish; or

- b) Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises within the parish during the whole of the previous 12 months; or
- c) Have had their principal or only place of work within the parish during the whole of the previous 12 months; or
- d) Have lived within the parish or within three miles of it during the whole of the previous 12 months.

Applicants must not be disqualified from holding office as a councillor under any relevant legislation.

4. Advertising the Vacancy

The Council will publicise any vacancy by such means as it considers appropriate, which may include:

- The Council website;
- Social media channels;
- Council noticeboards;
- Local press;
- Community groups and organisations.

The advertisement will specify:

- The ward (where applicable);
 - The closing date for applications;
 - How to obtain an application form;
 - The date of the meeting at which co-option will be considered.
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5. Application Process

Applicants will be required to complete a Co-option Application Form and return it by the published deadline.

Applications received after the closing date may not be considered.

Applicants may be asked to provide a short supporting statement explaining:

- Why they wish to become a councillor;
- Their skills, experience and interests;

- How they believe they can contribute to the Council and community.
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6. Consideration of Applications

Valid applications will be circulated to all councillors before the meeting at which the vacancy is to be considered.

Applicants may be invited to attend the meeting and, at the Chair's discretion, may be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and answer questions from councillors.

The Council will consider all eligible applicants on their merits.

The Council will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

7. Voting Procedure

The co-option of a councillor must be resolved by a majority vote of councillors present and voting.

Voting shall normally take place by a show of hands unless a recorded vote is requested in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

Where there are more applicants than vacancies:

- Councillors will vote for one candidate at a time;
- The candidate receiving an absolute majority of votes cast will be appointed;
- If no candidate receives an absolute majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes will be eliminated and a further vote taken;
- The process will continue until a candidate receives an absolute majority.

In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting may exercise a casting vote where permitted by law.

8. Declaration of Interests

Applicants should disclose any interests which may require registration if appointed.

Successful applicants will be required to complete all statutory declarations and registration requirements within the prescribed timescales.

9. Appointment

Following a successful vote, the successful applicant shall be declared co-opted to the Council.

The Town Clerk will arrange for the completion of:

- Declaration of Acceptance of Office;
- Register of Interests documentation;
- Induction and training arrangements;
- Provision of Council policies and procedures.

The successful applicant may take office immediately upon signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office or at the first suitable opportunity permitted by law.

10. Unsuccessful Applicants

The Council's decision on co-option is final.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified following the meeting and thanked for their interest in serving the community.

Application forms will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's data retention policies.

11. Data Protection

Personal information supplied during the co-option process will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's Privacy Notice.

Information will only be used for the purposes of administering the co-option process.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Council and updated as required to reflect legislative changes and good practice.