



# Watton Town Council Co-option Policy

Document Control

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Agreed at Council Meeting 12.03.19 - Minute Item 14

Reviewed on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 There are two circumstances under which the Monitoring Officer of Breckland Council will notify Watton Town Council that it may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option:

a) When a parish seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council (elections held at four-yearly intervals). In this instance the Parish Clerk would be notified of vacancies by the Monitoring Officer and efforts must be made to fill the vacancies by co-option.

b) During the life of a council when a parish seat has fallen vacant (because of a resignation, death or ineligibility).

The Parish Clerk will immediately notify the Monitoring Officer and the vacancy will be advertised. If the required 10 electors of the ward have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period (14 days) following publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Parish Clerk would be notified by Breckland Council that the vacancies should be filled by co-option. The Council will be notified and a notice of the vacancy and intention to co-opt must be posted.

1.3 Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Council. Watton Town Councillors receive no remuneration or allowances.

1.4 To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken this policy sets out the process followed by Watton Town Council when co-option is under consideration.

## **2. APPLICATION PROCESS**

2.1 On receipt, of written notification, from the Monitoring Officer at Breckland Council, that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option:

a) The Parish Clerk will announce the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the notification by means of displaying a Notice on the Council Notice board and website.

b) The Co-option Notice will include the closing date for acceptance of requests for consideration (between 14 and 30 days after the date of the display) and the number of vacancies.

c) The Parish Clerk will advise the Council when the Co-option Policy has been instigated.

2.2 Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying applicant(s).

2.3 Applicants are recommended to read the publication, "The Good Councillor Guide" which explains more about the role and the responsibilities of councillors – copies are available on request.

Queries can also be raised them with the Town Clerk.

2.4 Applications will be considered at the next available full Council meeting with applicants being notified of the date of the meeting as soon as possible.

2.5 Applicants should confirm how they eligibility and complete a Watton Town Council

Co-option Application Form (appendix 1)).

Applicants might like to include attributions as outlined:

Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability

The Town Council welcomes people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community and hopes for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following:

- Interest in local matters.
- Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.
- Good interpersonal skills.
- 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).
- Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.

Circumstances

- Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends.
- Flexible and committed to the Council
- Enthusiastic.

2.6 Applicants will be invited to attend the next full Town Council meeting at which their application will be considered. The Town Clerk will provide applicants with an agenda for the meeting.

At the meeting, applicants will be given the opportunity to speak for a maximum of 5 minutes to introduce themselves and explain why they want to join the council. Councillors are likely to ask candidates questions to further clarify their application.

If there are more candidates than vacancies the co-option will be decided by a ballot of the members. Voting will be according to the statutory requirements, in that, a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no 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.

Councillors shall vote by show of hands, and, in the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

2.7 On successful co-option applicants will be invited to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which completes the process for joining the council. Within 28 days of co-option, applicants are also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Town Clerk.

2.8 Applicants found to be offering inducements of any kind, at any stage in the co-option process, will be disqualified.

# Watton Town Council Co-option & Eligibility Application Form

Contact Details (Block Capitals please)

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Email address:
Home Tel. No:
Mobile Tel. No:

## Councillor Eligibility

Please tick which of the following applies to your application.

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Watton Town Councillor you must be:

- A British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
- 18 years of age or over on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are co-opted).

You must additionally be able to meet one of the following qualifications, please tick all that apply:

- I am registered as a local government elector for the parish of Watton; or
- I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish of Watton; or
- My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish of Watton; or
- I have during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option resided in the parish of Watton or within 3 miles of it.

Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if he/she:

a) holds any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented;

or

b) is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors\* (but see below);

or

c) has within five years before the day of co-option, or since his/her co-option, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine;

or

d) is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

\*This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:-

I. If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged;

II. If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part;

III. If the person is discharged without such a certificate.

In (i) and (ii) above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In (iii), it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.

I (insert name) ..... hereby confirm, that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of Watton Town Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed ..... Dated .....

Please also answer the following

How do you feel you could contribute to Watton Town Council?

What are your main interests in the Town?

NB: Should you be successful, you will be required to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct which includes completing a Declaration of Interests Form.

Please return completed form by February 28<sup>th</sup> 2021

Please inform us of any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application (e.g. if you are related to an employee of the Council/would require assistance during Council meetings with a disability)?