

Bury St Edmunds Town Council CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

1. As soon as practicable after notification has been received that no election has been called, any casual vacancies will be advertised as widely as possible within the parish of Bury St Edmunds, including but not limited to, the Council's notice boards, website, community engagement contacts, District and County Councillors, library, community centres, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, and by way of a press release. The notice will specify a period of 21 calendar days during which applications are sought from prospective candidates.
2. Candidates must complete the application form which is available on the Council's website at www.burystedmunds-tc.gov.uk or from the Town Council's offices.
3. If no applications are received by the deadline, the Clerk will place an advertisement for the vacancy in the relevant local newspaper, usually the Bury St Edmunds Free Press, as well as by email and through social media; to be reviewed annually. It will also be placed as an advertisement on the Council website
4. Prospective candidates must fulfil the same eligibility criteria as for an election (sections 79 and 80 of the Local Government Act 1972). The Council should be satisfied by its own investigation or, if this is not possible, by evidence provided by the proposed candidate, to authenticate qualifications or disqualifications as above.
5. Notice of the intention to co-opt to the vacancy will be given in the agenda for the next meeting of the Town Council and copies of all eligible such applications of interest will be supplied to Councillors with the agenda.
6. Eligible candidates will be sent a copy of the agenda for the meeting at which co-option will be considered and decided, and will be invited to attend the meeting, and may, if they wish, give a short presentation outlining their reasons for wishing to become a member of the Council and their relevant skills and experiences [maximum 5 minutes per candidate].
7. When the agenda item is reached, the Chairman will invite each candidate present to address the Council, if they wish.
8. The Chairman will then place the names of the candidates into alphabetical order and proceed to a vote. Councillors who are present will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
9. Voting will be by a show of hands and will continue until one candidate has received an absolute majority of votes of those Councillors present (i.e. where there are more than two candidates, and of the votes given, there is not an absolute majority in favour of one person, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken, and so on, until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. If two or more persons have equal and least votes, a vote should be taken to decide who shall remain in the ballot and whose name shall be struck off the list.) At this stage the successful candidate will be declared co-opted to the Council and, having first signed the declaration of acceptance of office, may participate in the remainder of the meeting.
10. The person co-opted must make a declaration of acceptance of office before, or at, the first meeting of Council following his co-option.

Notes:

- It is acceptable practice for Councillors to approach tentative candidates in order that they might offer themselves for co-option. It is also acceptable to advertise for co-opted applicants.
- Tentative candidates are not permitted to attempt to canvass members of the Council with regard to their application (see Standing Order 27.1)
- Term of Office - a person elected or co-opted to fill a casual vacancy is to hold office until the person in whose place they are elected or appointed would regularly have retired i.e. until the next ordinary election.

Amended November 2023