

BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

Introduction

If no request for an election is received by North Devon Council by the date of the Notice of Vacancy, the Electoral Services Department will advise the Town Council that it may co-opt to the 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 regular Town Council meeting.

The Town Council manages the process of co-option by itself and aims to demonstrate that it is fair and transparent by following the procedure set out below:

Procedure

1. Barnstaple Town Council invites interested candidates to write to the Town Clerk by a specified date via notices placed on its noticeboards and website. Candidates will be asked to confirm that they are qualified to be a Councillor (ref. Appendix A) and to include their CV and a brief explanation of why they would like to be a Town Councillor. Copies of the information received from candidates will be circulated by the Town Clerk to all Councillors prior to the meeting of the Town Council during which the co-option will be considered.
2. At the Town Council Meeting candidates will be invited to say something about themselves and what they would like to achieve as a Barnstaple Town Councillor. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of six minutes.
3. In a closed session of the Town Council meeting, without the public present, Councillors will discuss and consider the candidates. The public are invited back into the meeting before voting takes place.
4. Voting will take place by secret ballot. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy. In the event of a tie between two candidates for one vacancy the Chairperson will exercise the casting vote.
5. If there is only one candidate for one vacancy, they are not automatically co-opted – a yes/no vote will take place.
6. The successful candidate/s will be declared co-opted to the Town Council and, after signing the declaration of acceptance of office paperwork, will be asked to join the meeting.
7. The successful candidate is a Councillor in their own right and is no different to any other member; co-option is a legitimate form of election as part of the election process.

Appendix A

Qualifications to be a Councillor

A person is qualified to be elected and to be a Councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen and on the relevant day (that is, the day of nomination or election) they are 18 or over.

In addition, the person must meet at least one of the following criteria

1. on the relevant day and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the Parish of Barnstaple, or
2. during the whole of the twelve months before that day they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the Parish of Barnstaple, or
3. during the whole of the twelve months before that day their principal or only place of work has been in the Parish of Barnstaple, or
4. during the whole of the twelve months before that day they have resided in the Parish of Barnstaple or within three miles of it.

Except for qualification (1), these qualifications then continue for the full term of office, until the next ordinary elections.

Certain people are disqualified from standing, and these include paid officers (including the Clerks) of the Town Council, bankrupts and those subject to recent sentences of imprisonment.

Prepared by the Town Clerk
16th September 2022