



SAXMUNDHAM TOWN COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY

Review Body: Resources Committee
Policy Approval: Town Council
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1. Purpose

This policy sets out the process by which Saxmundham Town Council will fill a casual vacancy on the Council by co-option, in accordance with Rule 5(5) of The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006.

2. Legislative Background

If a casual vacancy arises and no election is requested by ten local electors within the statutory 14-day period, the Council is required to fill the vacancy by co-option.

The Council must act 'as soon as practicable' after the end of the 14-day period.

The co-option process must be completed by a formal resolution of the Council at a public meeting.

3. Eligibility

Any person being considered for co-option must meet the statutory eligibility criteria for serving as a Town Councillor. Candidates will be required to confirm their eligibility in writing before being considered.

To serve on a parish or town council (whether elected or co-opted), an individual must:

Citizenship & Age:

- Be 18 or older, and
- Be either a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, or an eligible EU citizen (with retained rights)

Local Connection (must satisfy at least one of the four):

- Be registered as a local government elector for the parish from nomination date onwards; or
- Have owned or rented land/premises in the parish for the full 12 months before nomination/polling day; or
- Had their principal or only place of work in the parish for the past 12 months; or
- Lived in the parish or within 3 miles (4.8 km) of it for the full 12 months before nomination date

Disqualifications

They cannot serve if, at nomination:

- They are employed by the parish council or hold a paid office under it;
- Subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order;
- Have had a sentence of 3 months or more (without option of a fine) in the last five years;
- Are disqualified under the Representation of the People Act (e.g. electoral offences);
- Are subject to a relevant First-tier Tribunal decision under the Localism Act 2011



4. Co-option Procedure

Fewer or Equal Number of Candidates than Vacancies:

- If the number of eligible candidates is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies, the Council will vote to co-opt all candidates by resolution.
- Candidates may address the Council if they wish, but it is not a requirement.

More Candidates than Vacancies:

- Candidates will be invited to speak briefly (typically up to 3 minutes) to explain their interest and suitability, though this is optional.
- The public and all candidates will be asked to leave the room only if the Council decides to discuss the applications in confidence. Voting must always be conducted in public.
- All eligible applications will be considered, including those from candidates not in attendance.

5. Voting Procedure

Voting will be by show of hands or signed ballot, in line with Standing Orders.

Each vacancy will be filled separately.

Councillors may vote for one candidate per vacancy.

To be co-opted, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting.

If no candidate receives a majority:

- The candidate(s) with the fewest votes will be eliminated.
- Voting will continue with the remaining candidates until a majority is achieved.

In the event of a tie, the Chair may use their casting vote.

Once a candidate is successfully co-opted, a formal resolution will be passed.

6. Post Co-option

Co-opted Councillors take office immediately and may participate in the remainder of the meeting.

They must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before or at the next meeting (or at a later date agreed by the Council).

Within 28 days of taking office, co-opted Councillors must complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests, as required by the Localism Act 2011.

7. Transparency and Fairness

The Council is committed to an open and transparent co-option process.

The process will be clearly advertised on the Council's website, social media and noticeboards, encouraging applications from all sectors of the community.



The Council will not discriminate against any applicant on grounds of age, race, gender, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

8. Responsibilities

The Town Clerk will be responsible for managing the co-option process, including advertising the vacancy, receiving applications, and advising candidates of the outcome.

Councillors are responsible for considering all eligible candidates fairly and in accordance with this policy.