



## Appendix 1(v)

# **NEW ROMNEY TOWN COUNCIL** **Co-Option Policy**



### **Vision Statement**

New Romney Town Council has an open and transparent approach to encouraging Members of the Community to apply to become Councillors.

The Council aims to encourage applications from individuals with a diverse range of relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

### **Casual Vacancies**

In the event of a Casual Vacancy occurring, public notice must be given by the Town Council (Section 87(2) of the Local Government Act 1972). The notice must be displayed in a conspicuous place within the Parish.

An election to fill the vacancy must be held if ten electors of the relevant Parish Ward write to the Monitoring Officer at Folkestone & Hythe District Council requesting that an election be held. The notice must be displayed for fourteen days (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays). If no request for an election is made, then the Town Council must fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as is practicable after the expiry of the fourteen day period referred to above.

If an election is requested, the vacancy must be filled by election and the Town Council cannot fill it by co-option, even if there are insufficient candidates. Where the casual vacancy occurs within six months before the day on which the Councillor whose office has become vacant would have retired, an election to fill the vacancy shall not be held.

There are no rules regarding the co-option of Members. The Town Council may choose who it wishes but the person must be qualified to have been a candidate and must not be disqualified as per the criteria set out in Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **Qualification for Co-option**

A candidate for Town Councillor is qualified if, when nominated:

- he / she is a British Subject or Citizen of the European Community
- is 18 years of age and
- is either in the list of electors for the parish of New Romney or has, during the whole of the preceding 12 months
  - (i) occupied land as owner or tenant within the parish,
  - (ii) had a principal place of work within the parish or
  - (iii) resided in or within 3 miles of the parish.

## **Disqualification**

A candidate is disqualified from becoming a Town Councillor if he / she:

- is employed by / holds a paid office under the local authority
- is bankrupt
- has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months without the option of a fine, during the five years preceding election
- is disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.
- Is subject to the notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the ordinary period allowing for making an appeal has passed, or has been convicted (post 28 June 2022) of any sexual offence or is subject of any sexual harm / sexual offences prevention order or sexual risk / risk of sexual harm order as outlined in The Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022\*
- Has been convicted of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility towards a candidate, future candidate or campaigner or holder of a relevant elective office (for polls on or after 02 May 2024)

*\*The Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 is not retrospective; this means that its disqualification will not apply to a person subject to a relevant order or notification requirement before 28 June 2022*

## **Co-Option Process**

Following the expiry of the 14 day period referred to above, a second notice is displayed, stating that a casual vacancy is required to be filled by co-option and inviting applications. Upon receipt of a completed application form, the candidate shall first be invited to meet informally with the Town Clerk / Proper Officer and then to provide details in writing as to why he / she would like to be co-opted onto the Council, highlighting any relevant qualifications and / or experience based on the Town Council's approved Councillor Person Specification. The afore-mentioned information is then circulated to all Members for consideration and the candidate is invited to attend a meeting of the Town Council to speak briefly in support of his / her application and to participate in a brief question / answer session, again based on the Town Council's approved Councillor Person Specification. Councillors' questions, which will have been submitted in writing to the Clerk prior to the meeting, will be raised via the Chairman. Relevant supplementary questions may be considered at the discretion of the Chairman. This forms a fair and transparent process for assessing the suitability of any proposed candidate who wishes to be co-opted onto the Town Council.

A date of not less than one month following receipt of the afore-mentioned application form(s) and supporting letter(s) shall be set for consideration of applications by the Town Council. Candidates shall be invited to attend and observe a selection of Council meetings in the interim and be provided with a schedule of meeting dates for this purpose.

Voting for the new Councillor then takes place and is by a show of hands unless the Council has adopted Standing Orders which allow any other form of voting for this purpose. If there is only one vacancy, a Councillor may only propose or second one candidate. The names of those properly proposed shall be put into alphabetical order and a vote then taken. Councillors have only one vote each. The first candidate to reach an absolute majority of those present and voting is declared to have been elected. Should no candidate receive a majority on the first vote, the person with the lowest number of votes is eliminated; voting takes place on the remainder – one vote per Councillor. This continues until one person receives an absolute majority. If only one candidate is standing for co-option, a simple 'For' or 'Against' vote will take place, subject to the candidate having first been proposed and seconded by Members of the Council. Once a candidate is declared to have been co-opted onto the Town Council, he / she is requested to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

### **Vacancies Arising due to Insufficient Nominations for Ordinary Election**

The law requires that the Council fills these vacancies by co-option. The process is broadly similar to the process for filling casual vacancies (as described above), however, there are two important differences when vacancies arise as a result of insufficient nominations at an ordinary election.

- Firstly, the Council is not required to give notice of the vacancies and there is no statutory period for allowing the electorate to call a by-election. The Council proceeds straight to co-option to fill the vacancies.
- Secondly, the law requires that the Council fills the vacancies within 35 days of the day of election, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and days of Public Thanksgiving or Mourning.

Although there is no legal requirement to give statutory notice of the vacancies, New Romney Town Council will do so via its website, social media page and noticeboards to attract applications as soon as practically possible, noting that the vacancies cannot be filled until after the candidates that are declared to have been duly elected officially come into office.

If the Council is NOT successful in filling the vacancies by co-option within 35 days of the day of election, then Folkestone & Hythe District Council could take steps to ensure that the vacancies are filled, including ordering a further election. However, in practice, it is unlikely that the District Council would exercise this Power, particularly if the Town Council can demonstrate that it is using best endeavours to fill the vacancies. It is important that the Town Council does endeavour to fill any post-election vacancies promptly, since the full cost of any additional election required to fill them would be transferred to the Town Council.

### **Post-Election Co-Option Process**

As per co-option to fill casual vacancies detailed above, with the following exceptions:

- No 14 day Notice required  
(As soon as is practically possible following notification of an uncontested election, the Clerk shall post Vacancy Notices on the Town Council website, social media page and Council noticeboards to attract applications.)
- Vacancies must be filled within 35 days of the day of election.



## Addendum 1 to Appendix 1(v)

### NEW ROMNEY TOWN COUNCIL



### Councillor Person Specification

<b>Name of Council:</b> NEW ROMNEY TOWN COUNCIL		
<b>Description of Office:</b> TOWN COUNCILLOR		
Competency	Essential	Useful but not Essential
<b>Relevant knowledge, education, professional qualifications and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Level / Degree Level / Professional or Vocational Qualification (eg town planning, law, accountancy, management and recruitment ... etc).</li></ul>
<b>Experience, skills, knowledge and ability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interest in local matters.</li><li>• Ability and willingness to represent the Council and the community.</li><li>• Good interpersonal skills.</li><li>• Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly, both verbally and in writing.</li><li>• Ability and willingness to work closely with other Members and to maintain good working relationships with Members and Staff.</li><li>• Good reading and analytic skills.</li><li>• Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (eg voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities...etc).</li><li>• Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience of working for or being a Member of a local authority or other public body.</li><li>• Experience of working with voluntary and or local community / interest groups.</li><li>• Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities.</li><li>• Good standard of computer literacy.</li><li>• Experience of delivering presentations.</li><li>• Experience of working with the media.</li><li>• Experience in financial control / budgeting.</li><li>• HR experience.</li></ul>
<b>Circumstances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and occasional events in the evening and at weekends.</li><li>• Flexible and committed to the Council.</li><li>• Enthusiastic.</li></ul>	



## Addendum **2** to Appendix 1(v)

### NEW ROMNEY TOWN COUNCIL

### COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM



#### **CONTACT DETAILS** (Block Capitals please)

<b>NAME:</b>	
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>POSTCODE:</b>	
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>HOME TEL. NO:</b>	
<b>MOBILE TEL. NO:</b>	

#### **About You**

Are you qualified in accordance with Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 to be co-opted onto New Romney Town Council (See NRTC Co-option Policy)?

**YES / NO**

Are you aware of any reason why you would be disqualified from becoming a Councillor in accordance with Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 (See NRTC Co-option Policy)?

**YES / NO**

**Any other information**

Is there any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application?

(optional)

---

---

---

---

---

**Are you prepared to undertake training relevant to the role?**

Yes / No

**Use of Personal Information**

The Town Council will use your information, including that which you provide on this application form, to assess your suitability to be a town councillor and, if co-opted onto the Council, for any business of the Council relevant to your role as a Councillor.

**Declaration & Consent**

I have read the section entitled "Use of Personal Information" and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this application form.

I declare the information given on this form to be true and correct.

SIGNED.....

NAME.....

DATE.....

Recommended by Personnel Panel: 05 November 2013

Approved at Full Council: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Last Reviewed: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025