



COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION POLICY

Approved by members:.....May 2026

Due for review:.....May 2027



COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Greater Wellington Town Council. The Co-option procedure is entirely managed by Greater Wellington Town Council and this policy ensures a fair and equitable process is carried out.

1.2 Whenever the need for co-option arises Greater Wellington Town Council will seek and encourage applications from those who meet the qualifying criteria and are eligible to stand as a councillor.

Councillors can legally approach individuals to suggest they may wish to apply.

1.3 All vacancies will be advertised on the town council noticeboard and website.

1.4 The advertisement to co-opt will include:

- The method by which applications can be made
- The closing date for all applications
- A contact point to obtain more information

1.5 The co-option policy will be reviewed annually.

2. Co-Option (Stage 1)

2.1 The co-option of a town councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the council and no by- election has been called. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time
- A councillor resigns
- A councillor dies
- A councillor becomes disqualified
- A councillor fails for six (6) consecutive months to attend meetings of a council, committee, or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the council at a meeting of an outside body

2.2 The Town Council must notify Durham County Council of a Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten or more electors write to Cornwall Council stating that an election is requested.

2.3 If ten or more residents do not request a by- election within fourteen working days of the vacancy being posted, as advised by Durham County Council, Greater Wellington Town Council is able to co-opt a councillor.

2.4 On receipt of written confirmation from Durham County Council Electoral Services, the vacancy can be filled by co-option. The Town Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the Council notice boards and website
- Advise the council that the co-option policy has been instigated

3. Co-Option (Stage 2)

3.1 Insufficiency of candidates at an ordinary election also provides Greater Willington Town Council with authority to exercise its rights to co-opt any person or persons to fill any vacancies within 35 days following the date of said ordinary election.

3.2 Greater Willington Town Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the Town Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply.

3.3 However, it is not desirable that electors in a particular Town Council boundary be left partially or full underrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Town Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload; equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or the achieve meeting quorums without difficulty.

3.4 Councillors elected by co-option are full members of Greater Willington Town Council.

4. Eligibility of Candidates

4.1 The Town Council can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that the applicant:

- is an elector in the Town Council boundary; or
- has resided in the area for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the town; or
- has his/her principal place of work in the Town Council area; or
- has lived within three miles radius (direct) of the Town Council area

4.2 Expressions of interest rather than proper applications will not be considered.

4.3 There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main are (Local Government Act 1972)

- Holding a paid office for the Town Council under the local authority
- Bankruptcy
- Having 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 the election; and
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practice

4.4 Eligibility of the candidate(s) will be confirmed by the Town Clerk.

4.5 All eligible candidates shall be invited by letter to attend the next suitable and available full council meeting following the application deadline. This may not be the next full council meeting, however if the candidates are unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged.

5. Applications

5.1 Candidates will be requested to complete an Eligibility Form confirming they are eligible for co-option. (a copy of the eligibility form is attached at Appendix A)

5.2 Submit information about themselves; by way of completing a short application form. (a copy of the application form is attached at Appendix B)

5.3 Candidates will be encouraged to contact the Town Clerk for further information about the Town Council, its current priorities and working arrangements, prior to submitting an application form.

5.4 All such documents will be treated by the Town Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.

6. Following the Application Process

6.1 Candidates will be invited to have an informal chat with Councillors at the Town Council office.

6.2 After the informal chat, candidate/s will be thanked for attending the office and advised the outcome of the co-option in writing. The Town Clerk will issue those decision letters and offer feedback as soon as practicable possible.

6.3 If a candidate is a relative of a Councillor, that Councillor should declare a non-registerable interest and withdraw from the meeting.

6.4 Only councillors present at the meeting may vote upon a person to fill this vacancy. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled. The Chair has the casting vote.

6.5 The Town Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'Acceptance of Office' paperwork and 'Registration of Interests' within 28 days of being elected.

6.6 If insufficient candidates come forward, or no candidate is elected, the process should continue whereby the vacancies are advertised again. The Council does not have to accept any candidate even if there is only one Candidate for one position.

6.7 Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

7. Elected Councillors (Co-Option)

7.1 Successfully co-opted candidates become councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member. They will be asked to sign the Declaration of Office at the next meeting.

7.2 Co-opted members will, once they have signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and agreed to be bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct, take their seat at Council and are then able to be appointed to a committee and/or as a representative to local organisations.

7.3 Any application can be considered in a candidate(s) absence, but if successful, members would need him or her to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office at the next Council Meeting.

APPENDIX A CO-OPTION ELIGIBILITY FORM

To be eligible for co-option as a Greater Willington Town Councillor you must satisfy certain criteria.

a)	Are you a British subject, citizen of the Commonwealth or citizen of the European Union?	YES/NO
b)	On the 'relevant date' (i.e., the day on which you are nominated or if there is a poll the day of the election) are you 18 years of age or over?	YES/NO
c)	I am registered as a local government elector for the Town of Greater Willington.	YES/NO
d)	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 Town of Greater Willington	YES/NO
e)	My principal or only place of work has, during the whole twelve months preceding my co-option, been in the Town of Greater Willington	YES/NO
f)	I have, during the whole of twelve months preceding my co-option, lived in the Town of Greater Willington or within 3 miles of it	YES/NO

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 specific criteria are not met:

a)	Are you an employee of Greater Willington Town Council?	YES/NO
b)	Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order	YES/NO
c)	Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	YES/NO
d)	Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	YES/NO

Use of Personal Information

The Town Council will use the information provided on this form to assess your eligibility to be a Town Councillor.

Declaration of Consent

I _____ hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Town Councillor for Greater Willington Town Council, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed: _____

Print: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

**GREATER WILLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL CO-OPTION
APPLICATION FORM**



NAME:	
ADDRESS:	
CONTACT NUMBERS: HOME: MOBILE:	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	

Please tell us something about what experience you can bring to Greater Wellington Town Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business or trade union experience (please continue on an additional page if required).

Please tell us something about skills you can bring to the Council, for example, professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise (please continue on an additional page if required).

Please explain why you are interested in becoming a Town Councillor.

Please include any other information you would like to add in support of your application.
(please continue on an additional page if required)

Are there any questions you would like to ask the Town Council prior to the meeting to consider applicants?

Signed: _____

Print: _____

Date: _____

Your application requires signatures of 2 registered electors (known as proposer and seconder) from the town area:

	<u>Proposer</u>	<u>Seconder</u>
Name:		
Address:		
Signature		

Please complete Appendix A & B and email to the Town Clerk at emma@gwtc.co.uk or by post to:

Mrs Emma McCann
Town Clerk
Greater Willington Town Council
67 High Street
Willington
Crook
Co. Durham
DL15 0PF