

CO-OPTION POLICY & PROCESS 2025-2027

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 There are two circumstances under which the Electoral Officer of Cheshire West and Chester Council will notify Frodsham Town Council that it may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option:

1. when a seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council. In this instance the Town Clerk would be notified of vacancies by CWAC and that efforts may be made to fill the vacancies by co-option.
2. during the life of a council when a seat has fallen vacant (because of a resignation, death or ineligibility). The Town Clerk will immediately notify the Electoral Officer and the vacancy will be advertised. If the required 10 electors have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period (currently 14 days) following publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Town Clerk would be notified by CWAC that the vacancies can be filled by co-option. The Council will be notified and must give public notice of the vacancy if its intention is to co-opt.

1.2 The Town Council is not obliged to co-opt to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply.

1.3 However, it is not desirable that electors be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times.

1.4 Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Council. Frodsham Town Councillors are volunteers who receive no remuneration or allowances.

1.5 To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken this policy sets out the process to be followed by Frodsham Town Council when co-option is under consideration.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS TO BE FOLLOWED

2.1 On receipt of written notification from the Electoral Officer at Cheshire West and Chester Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option and on instruction from the Council:

3. The Town Clerk will announce the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification by means of displaying a Notice on the Council notice board and website. A copy of the Notice will also be sent to the local press.
4. The Co-option Notice will include the closing date of requests for consideration (between 14 and 30 days after the date of the display) and the number of vacancies.
5. The Co-option Notice will also be displayed in other locations if instructed by the Council.
6. The Town Clerk will advise the Council when the Co-option Policy has been instigated by notifying all councillors.

2.2 Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying applicant(s).

2.3 Applicants are recommended to read the publication, “The Good Councillor Guide”, which explains more about the role and responsibilities of councillors – copies are available on request. If you have any questions you are welcome to raise them with the Town Clerk.

2.4 Applications will be considered at the next available Full Council meeting. To ensure that applications are included on the agenda they should be sent to the Town Clerk at least one week before the meeting (earlier if there are bank holidays).

2.5 Application letters should explain how you are eligible and confirm that you are not disqualified (by completing the co-option application form at Appendix 1). Application letters should also explain why applicants are interested in applying and what they think they can bring to the role of Town Councillor. Some topics that applicants might like to consider are shown in the table below, but applicants are not expected to be able to demonstrate all of these competencies.

COMPETENCY	DEMONSTRATED BY
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	We welcome people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community. We are looking for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following: • Interest in local matters. • Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills. • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff. • Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other town councils, principal authority, charities). • Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.
Circumstances	• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends. • Flexible and committed to the Council. • Enthusiastic.

2.6 Applicants will be invited to attend the next Full Town Council meeting at which their application will be considered. The Town Clerk will provide applicants with an agenda for the meeting. Details of Town Council meeting dates and venues are available on the website or from the Town Clerk.

At the meeting, applicants will be given the opportunity to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes to introduce themselves and explain why they want to join the Council.

Nomination of candidates

Before any vote takes place, each eligible candidate shall be formally proposed and seconded by members of the Council.

The Chair will invite a proposer and seconder for each candidate in turn. The purpose of the proposer and seconder is to place each candidate formally before the Council for consideration.

To ensure that all eligible candidates who have properly applied for co-option are considered fairly and consistently, every candidate shall receive a proposer and seconder before voting commences.

A member may propose or second more than one candidate. Proposing or seconding a candidate does not indicate that the member is committed to voting for that candidate.

Once all candidates have been proposed and seconded, the Chair will confirm the names of all candidates before proceeding to the vote.

Voting

If there are more candidates than vacancies the co-option will be decided by a ballot of the members. Voting will be according to the statutory requirements, in that a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

For the avoidance of doubt, where there is one vacancy each member may cast one vote only in each round of voting. A member may abstain; an abstention is not a vote cast and is therefore not included when determining the votes of those present and voting.

Councillors shall vote by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

2.7 On successful co-option applicants will be invited to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which completes the process for joining the Council. Within 28 days of co-option, applicants are also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Town Clerk. Unsuccessful applicants can request that their details be kept on file for up to 6 months should any new vacancies arise.

2.8 Applicants found to be offering inducements of any kind, at any stage in the co-option process, will be disqualified.

APPENDIX 1 – CO-OPTION & ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Home telephone: _____

Mobile telephone: _____

Please explain why you are interested in applying and any relevant experience you think you can bring to the role of Town Councillor. Please include any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application (for example, if you are related to an employee of the Council or would require assistance during Council meetings because of a disability).

Councillor Eligibility

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Frodsham Town Councillor you must satisfy the statutory qualification requirements applicable on the date of co-option. Please confirm the qualifications that apply to you:

☐ I am registered as a local government elector for the Town of Frodsham; or

☐ 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 Frodsham; or

☐ My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the Town of Frodsham; or

☐ I have during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option resided in the Town of Frodsham or within 3 miles of it.

Please also confirm that you are not disqualified from being elected or being a member of a local council under the applicable provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 or other electoral law.

☐ I confirm that I am not disqualified from holding office as a local councillor.

Declaration

I hereby confirm that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of Frodsham Town Councillor and that the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Name: _____

Ward: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____