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Reviewed: 5 June 2025
Next Review: June 2026

CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

The co-option of a Town Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Town Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken, the procedure below will be followed by West Mersea Town Council:

1. On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Service of the City Council, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Clerk will advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the council notice boards and website and place an advertisement in the local press. The advertisement will confirm the vacancy, the reason for it and confirm there is to be a co-option. The advertisement will state the rules for eligibility and direct interested parties to write to the Clerk confirming their eligibility to sit on the Town Council including a short statement explaining the reasons they want to become a Town Councillor by completing an application and eligibility form. There will be a deadline for responses of not less than 6 weeks from the date of insertion. The date of the meeting when the co-option is to be made will be stated in the advertisement.
2. Nominees must also be made aware that canvassing of Council members will disqualify them from standing for the vacancy.
3. Copies of the application forms will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk, with the agenda and meeting pack prior to the meeting of the Council where the co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and Councillors as strictly private and confidential.
4. At the Council meeting when the co-option takes place, each nominee will be invited to speak for up to 3 minutes. When all the nominees have spoken the Chairman shall seek proposers and seconders for each nomination (whether or not they have spoken) and the vote will follow.
5. The voting process will follow Standing Order 8 below. In order to be co-opted onto the Council, the candidate must receive an absolute majority of the vote of those present and voting.
6. After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected.

In the event of vacancies following the close of nominations for the full Town Council elections, the Clerk shall follow the above procedure to fill the vacancies.

Standing Order 8: VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.