



Chichester City Council

Co-option Policy

Date adopted by Full Council: 17 December 2025

Minute ref: COUNCIL2025/28

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are two circumstances under which the council may, if it so wishes, proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option:
 - When a seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council (currently every four years)
 - During the life of the council, a seat falls vacant but the required 10 electors of the have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period following publication of the notice of vacancy
- 1.2 The 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 in the city 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 Members 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 To ensure a fair and transparent process is undertaken, this policy outlines the procedure to be followed by the council when co-option is considered.

2. Application process

- 2.1 On receipt of written notice from the Democratic Services Manager at Chichester District Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option:
 - The Clerk will advertise the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification
 - The co-option advertisement will include the closing date for acceptance of requests for consideration (between 14 and 30 days after the date of the advertisement) and the number of vacancies, and will be displayed on the council website, social media platforms and noticeboards
- 2.2 Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s). Candidates found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.
- 2.3 Applicants for a vacancy will be asked to:
 - Submit information about themselves by completing a short application form, including a description of their interest in becoming a councillor and specifying any skills or qualifications which may benefit the council
 - Confirm their eligibility for the position of councillor within the statutory rules, a copy of which will be attached to the application form
- 2.4 Copies of the applicant's application form will be circulated to all Members by the Clerk at least seven working days prior to the Council meeting where the co-

option will be considered. The application forms and any supporting documents will be treated by the Clerk and Members as strictly confidential.

- 2.5 Councillors may choose to invite candidates to attend an informal interview ahead of the council meeting at which they will be considered for appointment to the council. In the interests of fairness, all applicants will be invited to attend and given the same questions. Non-attendance will not be prejudicial to the council's final co-option decision.
- 2.6 Candidates will be sent a full agenda of the meeting at which they are to be considered for appointment, and will be informed they may, if they so wish, speak for up to three minutes about their application during the co-option item on the agenda at the meeting. If the meeting is to be conducted remotely, in the interests of fairness, applicants will be assessed on their application forms only.

3. Voting procedure

- 3.1 Voting will be according to the agreed procedure in standing orders, namely:
'Where more than 2 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. Any tie may be settled by the Chairman's casting vote.'
- 3.2 Voting will be conducted as per the agreed procedure in standing orders, namely:
'Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on any question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda. At the request of two Councillors, voting on any question shall be by a signed ballot.'
- 3.3 After the vote has been concluded, the chairman will declare the successful candidate(s) duly elected. A Member elected by co-option is a full member of the council but is not eligible for the basic City allowance.

4. Acceptance of office

- 4.1 The successful candidate(s) must sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office before they can act as a councillor. The Register of Members Interests form must be completed within 28 days and the Clerk will forward a copy to the District Monitoring Officer.

Co-option Application Form

Full name	
Home address	
Postcode	
Telephone number	
Mobile telephone number	
Email	

PLEASE ANSWER THE YES/NO QUESTIONS CAREFULLY AS THEY SET OUT THE LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING A CITY COUNCILLOR

QUALIFICATIONS

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country? Yes/No

Are you 18 or over? Yes/No

(You need only one of the following four qualifications but please say Yes to all that apply)

Are you on the electoral register for the City? Yes/No

Have you lived either in the City, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year? Yes/No

Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the City for at least a year? Yes/No

Have you had your only or main place of work in the City for at least a year? Yes/No

DISQUALIFICATIONS

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order? Yes/No

Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel islands or the 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

Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority? Yes/No

SKILLS AUDIT

Please tick the boxes below relevant to your knowledge

Specific to City Council

- ☐ Knowledge of Chichester City Council's work in general
- ☐ Knowledge of Chichester City Council's work specifically
- ☐ Knowledge of the local authority involved with the council's work
- ☐ Knowledge of the local statutory agencies involved with the council's work
- ☐ Knowledge of national policy concerning the council's work

General to City Council

- ☐ Knowledge of the local area in general
- ☐ Knowledge of current good practice for charities
- ☐ Experience of other voluntary organisations (as committee)
- ☐ Experience of other voluntary organisations (as staff or volunteer)
- ☐ Campaigning
- ☐ Partnership Working
- ☐ Community Development

Management/Organisation

- ☐ General Management
- ☐ Financial Management
- ☐ Project Management
- ☐ Monitoring and Evaluation
- ☐ Planning
- ☐ Policy Making

Professional

- ☐ Law
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ IT
- ☐ HR
- ☐ Marketing/PR
- ☐ Training/Development
- ☐ Other please indicate:

Committee

- ☐ Chairing
- ☐ Consensus building
- ☐ Energy and Enthusiasm
- ☐ Strategic thinking
- ☐ Governance

Do you have anything you wish to contribute to the City Council not mentioned above either in terms of experience, knowledge or skills?

Please tell us your reasons for wishing to become a City Councillor?

City council meetings usually take place on Wednesday evenings with the time for that year being decided by Council at the Annual Meeting of Council in May. Committee and Sub-Committee meeting times and dates are decided by the relevant body at their first meeting after the Annual Meeting of Council. At the time of writing the main Standing Committees generally meet in the evening while Sub-Committees meeting during the day. Unfortunately, under present legislation the City Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of councillors' childcare or care of dependants.

Are there any factors, other than exceptional circumstances, that might prevent you from regularly attending the monthly City Council or standing committee Meetings?

What are your hobbies/interests?

Lastly are there any questions you would like to ask us?

As a councillor representing your community you will help keep it a great place to live and work. You will be supported in your role and will be expected to undertake training. You should be comfortable working electronically. You should have a positive outlook and a can-do attitude and be willing to work as part of a team.

Signed.....

Date...../...../.....

Please return to the Town Clerk

Town Clerk
Chichester City Council
The Council House
North Street
Chichester
PO19 1LQ

Tel No: 01243 788502

E-mail: clerk@chichestercity.gov.uk

Councillor vacancy – specifications taken into consideration

COMPETENCY	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Relevant knowledge, Education, Professional Qualifications & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. • Good IT skills as majority of communication is done by email. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A levels/degree level and or specific vocational training and or • <i>professional qualification (eg accountant, teacher, surveyor, architect) may be specified.</i>
Experience, skills, knowledge and ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid interest in local matters • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community. • Good interpersonal skills • Ability to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff. • Good reading and analytic skills. • Ability and willingness to work with the council's partners (e.g. Voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities). • Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training. • Ability to work under pressure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of HR, procurement, contract management, financial control or risk management and compliance, public relations. • Experience of working in another public body or not for profit organisation. • Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/interest groups. • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities. • Experience of delivering presentations. • Experience or working with the media. • Experience in financial control/budgeting • Experience in staff management.
Other requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends. • Flexible • Enthusiastic 	