



Co-option of Councillors

A casual vacancy has arisen for the role of Parish Councillor for Haverhill Town Council West Ward. As a by-election was not called the Town Council now seeks to fill the seat through co-option. Suitable candidates are invited to put their name forward for consideration.

The fully completed form must be received by the Town Clerk by 3pm on Monday March 11th 2024. It may be delivered as a hardcopy to Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill CB9 8AR, or emailed to colin.poole@haverhill-tc.gov.uk

Please note the qualifying criteria and also circumstances in which a person is disqualified from being a Parish Councillor.

Qualifying criteria

Unless disqualified, under s.79, Local Government Act 1972 a person is qualified to be co-opted to a council if they are a qualifying British, Commonwealth, or EU citizen, are 18 years of age or over and:

- on the day of co-option (18th March 2024) they are and continue to be an elector for the parish; **or**
- during the whole of the previous 12 months have occupied as owner/tenant any land or other premises in that area; **or**
- their principal or only place of work during the previous 12 months has been in that area; **or**
- has resided in, or within three miles of, the Parish for the previous twelve months

Disqualification

Under s.80 of the 1972 Act, a person is disqualified from being a Parish Councillor if they:

- hold any paid office or employment with the Parish Council; **or**
- is the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order, an interim restrictions order, a debt relief restrictions order, or interim order; **or**
- have 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 preceding five years; **or**
- have been disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

Applications

Thank you for considering standing for the role of Parish Councillor. It is an important part of the democratic and civil life of a town to have citizens come forward who are willing to put their heads above the parapet in order to shape the sort of town they want to live and work in.

Most Town Council meetings take place on a Monday or Tuesday evening at 7pm. Some are in-person at the Haverhill Arts Centre whilst others are held via Zoom.

What you are volunteering to do:

- A Councillor has a responsibility to ALL the people in ALL the parish, not just those in your ward. You do not have to reside in the ward you represent.
- Representative democracy means that Councillors are a representative cross-section of society. You have volunteered to read the papers sent to you and to take part in debates about how best to look after the interests of Haverhill as a whole. You do this so everyone else in the community can just get on with their lives reassured that 'someone like them' is looking after their interests. Not all the decisions you will have to make will be enjoyable. Whilst getting elected or co-opted may be a popularity contest, the role of Councillor is set out in law and is a serious commitment.
- As a Councillor, you will be expected to listen to your residents and be prepared to give them a voice, whether you agree with their view of a matter. You are not obliged to vote a particular way just because it seems like lots of residents are telling you to. You are required to make decisions objectively. They have not read the papers, heard the debate or have the deeper understanding you will develop.
- Being a Parish Councillor is a team activity. It is unlawful for you to make decisions by yourself, even if you are Mayor. If co-opted, you will be in the same close-knit team as people from other political parties. Please treat your fellow Councillors with respect and always remember they are your new friends and colleagues.
- You should familiarize yourself with the Code of Conduct <https://haverhill-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-Haverhill-Town-Council-Code-of-Conduct-2022-06-27.pdf> and should not seek office unless you can be confident that you intend, and are able, to abide by the Code.
- Papers are sent out electronically ahead of the meeting and Councillors are assumed to have read them and done any background research ahead of the meeting. We will set up council email mailboxes for each Councillor, so that council business and data is kept separate from your personal email.
- Legally, the agenda (the 'Summons') is set by the Clerk as Proper Officer of the Council, taking into account the legal requirements for certain decisions to be taken and what both the Councillors and general public ask to be discussed. It is unlawful for a council to make decisions on matters not clearly set out in the agenda, so the Chair is tasked with preventing discussions wandering off-topic.
- The default position is that papers and the summons (agenda) are emailed to you and documents are either shown on-screen or some key hard-copies provided at the meeting, to help reduce costs. If you prefer to receive paper copies through the post, you will need to let the Town Clerk know at the co-option meeting.
- Formal meetings are by default open to the public to attend, film, report on and take part in during the Public Forum. However, it is a meeting held in public, not a public meeting. Support the meeting Chair by addressing your comments to him/her and follow their lead to ensure the agenda is followed.
- Training for new Councillors and members who become Chair of Council or committees is available and it is expected that you will attend training when it is offered. We can arrange whole-council training too.
- Candidates are asked to submit the attached form which enables them to confirm that they meet the qualifying criteria and are not disqualified, as well as to provide background information to help the Council choose in the event of there being more applicants than vacant seats.

At the co-option meeting

When applications have been received, the co-option will be placed on the agenda of a suitable meeting of the Council.

If there are the same number of, or less, eligible candidates than vacancies then the Council will simply resolve to co-opt them on to the Council. Where there are more candidates than vacant seats, the Council will select the required number.

The selection will be an open, fair process with the public present, including candidates unless they choose to leave. Each candidate will be given an opportunity to briefly address the Council should they wish. All valid applications will be considered, including those of candidates not present.

In cases of more than one vacancy, each will be dealt with separately. Members will be asked to vote for their preferred candidate. An absolute majority is required and if there are more than two candidates, the process in Standing Order 8 will be followed:

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.

Once the process has been completed, the Council will co-opt the successful candidate(s) to the Council with a formal resolution. The successful candidate(s) take office immediately and can take part in the remainder of the meeting should they wish to do so. New Councillors must make a declaration of acceptance of office and, where possible, this will be dealt with at that meeting, but the law only requires it to be made at/before the next meeting (or a later meeting agreed by Council).

All Councillors are required under the Localism Act 2011 to complete a Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests form within 28 days of taking office. The Clerk to the Council will forward this to the Monitoring Officer of the district council.



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Co-option Application Form

Name	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email address	

Please detail why you think you would be a good candidate to join Haverhill Town Council (continue on a separate sheet if necessary). This may be skills, knowledge or experience through work, volunteering, previous public service, or your personal connection to the town. You are advised to visit the Haverhill Town Council website to familiarize yourself with what the Town Council does: www.haverhill-tc.gov.uk

Why do you want to be a Town Councillor?

Declaration and consent

I confirm that I am not disqualified from being a councillor and meet the criteria under s.79, Local Government Act 1972, as below:

- I am over 18 years age.
- I am a qualifying British, Commonwealth citizen or an EU citizen.

I meet one or more of the other requirements, as indicated below (tick ALL that apply).

- I am registered as a local government elector for the parish of Haverhill.
- 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 parish.
- My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish of Haverhill.
- I have during the whole of those twelve months resided in or within 3miles of the parish of Haverhill.
- I will comply with the Code of Conduct.

Signed..... Name

Date.....

Please return this completed form to:

colin.poole@haverhill-tc.gov.uk

or by hand/post to The Town Clerk, Haverhill Town Council, Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill, CB9 8AR

Use of personal information

Haverhill Town Council will use your information, including that which you provide on this application form, to assess your suitability as a Parish Councillor. For full details of how we manage personal information please use this link to visit our website and our privacy notice.