Cinderford Town Council: Co-option Policy

1. Principles of Co-option

The Town Council is committed to a process which is fair, open and transparent and complies with the Equalities Act 2010, in which the successful candidate is selected upon merit.

2. Notification

Upon receipt of written notification from the electoral officer at Cinderford Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by co-option, and upon instruction from the Council, the Town Clerk will publish the vacancy within 21 days of receipt of the written notification.

3. The Co-option Notice

The co-option notice / advert will include the following details:

• The method by which applications can be made

• The closing date for all applications

• A contact point to obtain more information (ordinarily this will be the Town Clerk)

• How to find further information either electronically or in paper format

4. Promotion of the vacancy

To support an open and transparent process, the Town Council will publicise the opportunity as widely as possible within the parish, using a range of media.

• The co-option notice will be placed on all noticeboards and in local printed media

• An advert will be posted on the Town Council facebook page and the Council's website and its widespread sharing will be encouraged

• Interested individuals will be provided with an application form, a copy of this policy, background information on the Council and the role of a Councillor.

• Councillors are encouraged to share information about the vacancy.

5. Eligibility

Eligibility is determined primarily by the Local Government Act 1972. Details of eligibility will be provided on the advert and assessed by application form. The Town Clerk will be responsible for determining eligibility based upon the information provided.

6. Applications

• Individuals will be given at least 14 days' notice to make an application to the Council.

• Other than the completed application form, applicants should not submit any other supporting

paperwork and they should not lobby any individual councillor. A breach of this rule could result in the candidate being excluded.

• The precise dates and times for submission will be included in the application pack. As far as possible the deadline shall be at least 7 days prior to the Council meeting at which a decision is due to be made.

• Late applications will not be accepted.

• Copies of the applicants' application forms will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk, along with the summons to attend the next full Council meeting following the application deadline.

• Applications will be considered as strictly confidential papers as they will likely contain personal information relating to the candidate. The sharing of personal information must always be in accordance with data protection legislation and council policies.

5. Decision Making Process

• All eligible candidates will be invited to attend the Full Council meeting at which cooptions will be considered.

• If candidates are unable to attend this meeting, their application will still be considered in their absence (unless it is withdrawn).

• No alternative date or time for a meeting will be arranged.

• The co-option process will be determined in a public session of Council and a specific agenda item will be set aside for applicants to make a brief, verbal presentation to Council in support of their application.

• A maximum of three minutes will be allowed per candidate. Candidates will be asked to give presentations individually with other candidates leaving the Council Chamber or meeting room.

• Members may ask questions of the candidates following their presentations. Asking of political aspirations or membership is not allowed.

• Following the conclusion of all presentations, there will be no discussion of the presentations and the Council will proceed to voting.

• All voting will be by ballot papers previously prepared by the Town Clerk.

• The initial vote will be to decide whether to proceed with co-option

• If there is more than one vacancy, this question shall be asked after each round of voting

• Should the Council resolve that there are suitable candidates and to proceed, the Council will vote for individual candidates in alphabetical order.

• Councillors are still bound to declare an interest if they related to or have a close relationship to an individual candidate and must withdraw from the meeting for any vote relating to that candidate.

• A successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote by those Councillors present
• If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and not one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, the Chairman must strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again until an absolute majority is achieved.

• In accordance with Standing Orders, the Chairman may exercise his/her right to use a casting vote
• If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes

• The Council is not obliged to fill all or any vacancies, but will take steps to advertise for further co-options • The outcome of the ballot shall remain confidential and candidates will only be advised as to who has been successful.

• Successfully co-opted candidates become Councillors in their own right, with immediate effect (subject to the signing of the declaration of acceptance of office)

• The co-opted members will be asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before or at the first meeting of the Town Council after their election and to agree to be bound by the Council's adopted Code of Conduct. They may then take their seat at Council and will have the ability to be appointed to committees and or become a representative to local organisations.

• Any newly co-opted members will be provided with a welcome pack and invited to attend an induction and training session with the Town Clerk and/or other officers. This should take place where possible before the next Full Council meeting.

Approved: Cinderford Town Council, 8 March 2022

Amended: 13th October 2026

Review: Next review March 2030