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CO-OPTION POLICY

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of Members to Pontypool Community Council.

1.2 The co-option of a Community Councillors occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called, or in the six-months preceding a scheduled election. To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken the following procedure will be followed by Pontypool Community Council.

2 Procedure

2.1 On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Officer at Torfaen County Borough Council, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Clerk will:

(i) advertise the vacancy for 4 weeks on the Council notice boards and website;
(ii) advise the Council that the Co-option Policy has been instigated, by sending an email to all Councillors.

2.2 Applicants for co-option will be asked to:

(i) submit information about themselves, by completing an application form and submitting their curriculum vitae;
(ii) confirm their eligibility for the position of Community Councillor within the statutory rules.

2.3 Anonymised copies of the applicants' curriculum vitae and application form will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least 7 days prior to the meeting of the Council, when the co-option will be considered. **All documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as strictly private and confidential.**

2.4 At the next available Council meeting, the anonymised applications will be considered. The person the Council chooses must be qualified to have been a candidate, in accordance with the Local Government and Elections Wales Act (2021).

2.5 Voting will be in accordance with 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 none 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. Therefore, if there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded. If two candidates poll the same number of votes a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number vacancies. Councillors will vote by a show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. If any Councillor so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted for, against or abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

2.6 The first candidate to receive an absolute majority of those present and voting will be duly elected.

2.7 After the vote has been concluded, this business is concluded when the Chair declares that the successful candidate is duly elected. The successful candidate is then declared 'co-opted' to the Council and summoned to attend the next Council meeting.

2.8 The Clerk will advise the Monitoring Officer of Torfaen County Borough Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.

3 Following Election

3.1 Following the successful election, the Clerk is responsible for providing each new Councillor with an induction, a new Councillor's pack and should ensure that all new councillors have read and understood the Code of Conduct and the Standing Orders adopted by the Community Council.

3.2 Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business, they must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and deliver it to the Clerk. The individual will be summoned to attend the next Full Council meeting where they will sign the declaration.

3.3 All new Councillors must, within 28 days of appointment to office, register their interests with Torfaen County Borough Council's Monitoring Officer. Usually, forms are supplied by the Monitoring Officer to the Clerk.

3.4 The Clerk will provide the new Councillor with the following documentation (either electronically or in paper format):

(i) Copy of Standing Orders;
(ii) Details of One Voice Wales Code of Conduct, New Councillor and other training sessions;
(iii) Good Councillor Guide.

4 Unsuccessful Candidates

4.1 The Council is not obliged to provide feedback on the application process to unsuccessful candidates.