

Co-option procedure

1. In the event of there being vacancies after the elections, through an insufficiency of candidates, council at its first meeting, provided it is quorate, may appoint individuals to the vacant seat(s). In the case of these elections, in 2017, no candidates were nominated for the two seats in Upper Spittal Ward.
2. Council may if it so chooses decline to fill vacancies at its first meeting, and choose to do so at a subsequent meeting. In such a case a formal notice does not appear to be required, and a poll cannot be claimed (as it can for a casual vacancy).
3. Council resolved, in April 2017, to adopt the following procedure;
 - a. that individuals willing to be co-opted be invited to nominate which ward(s) they wish to be co-opted for,
 - b. that would be co-optees be invited to make a presentation to council, for no more than three minutes, on their vision for Berwick,
 - c. that the questioning of co-optees be restricted to the issues raised by them during their presentation, and
 - d. that, where there is more than one potential co-optee for a seat, an eliminating ballot be used to choose the successful candidate, with the voting numbers for each round of the eliminating ballot recorded in the minutes.
4. Council is reminded of the then Interim Town Clerk's advice to a previous meeting, that there is no lawful reason why the public should be excluded from the consideration of this item of business.
5. Council is reminded that an eliminating ballot is one where the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated before members are balloted again, so that the candidates elected have received an absolute majority of the votes cast. In this case, since there are two vacancies, each member may cast two votes, but only one vote for any individual candidate.
6. In order to make it easy to be sure votes are validly cast, each member will be issued with a blank ballot slip with two boxes on it, and shall write the names of up to two candidates in those boxes. The Proper Officer will count the ballots, and report the result to the Mayor, indicating either which candidates have achieved an absolute majority, or which candidate should be eliminated. In case of confusion, an absolute majority is defined as 'Half the number of members casting a ballot, plus one.'
7. Council officers, acting on this procedure, have advertised the existence of two vacancies for the Upper Spittal Ward on the council website. Council is **recommended** to invite any potential co-optees to make themselves known this evening, to hear their presentations, to question them about their presentations, and to then proceed to an eliminating ballot to choose two candidates to fill the vacancies.