

Co-option Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the procedure to be followed by the Council when filling a casual vacancy by co-option where:

- a casual vacancy has arisen; and
- the statutory notice of vacancy has been published; and
- the prescribed period for requesting an election has expired; and
- the Returning Officer has confirmed that no election has been requested.

The Council recognises that co-option is an important means of maintaining democratic representation and will conduct the process in an open, transparent, fair and impartial manner.

2. Eligibility

Applicants must be qualified to serve as a parish councillor under the Local Government Act 1972 and must not be disqualified from holding office.

Applicants will normally be asked to confirm that they:

- are at least 18 years of age;
- are a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen or eligible citizen of another qualifying state;
- meet at least one of the statutory qualifications for election as a parish councillor; and
- are not disqualified from holding office.

3. Advertising the Vacancy

Following confirmation from the Returning Officer that the vacancy may be filled by co-option, the Council will:

- advertise the vacancy on its noticeboard and website (where available);
- publicise the opportunity through other appropriate local channels;
- specify the closing date for applications; and
- provide an application form and information about the role of a parish councillor.

Normally, applications should remain open for at least 14 days.

4. Applications

Applicants should submit:

- a completed application form;
- confirmation that they are eligible to serve;
- a brief statement explaining why they wish to become a councillor and what skills or experience they would bring.

Late applications will normally not be considered.

5. Consideration of Applications

Applications will be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

The meeting will be held in public unless confidential information requires exclusion under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Applicants may be invited to attend and may be given up to five minutes to introduce themselves and answer questions from councillors.

Applicants will withdraw before any debate or vote takes place.

6. Decision-Making

Only councillors present and entitled to vote may participate.

Councillors must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other relevant interests in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Council will seek to appoint the applicant who, in its opinion, is best able to contribute to the work of the Council and the local community.

Voting will normally be by a show of hands unless the Council resolves otherwise.

A simple majority of votes cast is required for appointment.

In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair has a second or casting vote where permitted by law.

7. Notification

The successful applicant will be notified as soon as practicable.

Unsuccessful applicants will also be informed courteously of the outcome.

8. Acceptance of Office

Before acting as a councillor, the successful applicant must:

- sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office; and
- complete the Register of Members' Interests within 28 days of taking office.

The Clerk will arrange an induction and provide copies of the Council's key policies and procedures.

9. Equal Opportunities

The Council welcomes applications from all eligible members of the community and is committed to equality of opportunity throughout the co-option process.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically or following any changes to legislation or recognised good practice.

Signed:

Dated: