



CO-OPTION POLICY

Adopted:

Minute ref:

1. Purpose of this Policy

This policy sets out the procedure the Council will follow when filling a vacancy by co-option. It ensures that the process is compliant, open, fair, and transparent, and that all eligible residents have the opportunity to be considered.

2. Legal Framework

Casual Vacancies arise when a Councillor leaves office for any reason during the normal term of office. They are governed by the *Local Government Act 1972* and the *Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 2006*. A vacancy may be filled by co-option **only when**:

- A Notice of Vacancy has been published, and
- Fewer than ten electors have requested a by-election within the statutory 14-day period.

When these conditions are met, the Council is required to fill the vacancy “as soon as practicable” by co-option.

Vacancies arising from insufficient candidates at Ordinary Election are also filled by Co-option but the above procedure is not required.

3. Notification of Vacancy and Call for Candidates

Once the Council is permitted to co-opt, it will:

- Publicise the vacancy to be filled by Co-option on the parish noticeboards, website, and other appropriate channels.
- Invite expressions of interest (written or verbal) to the Clerk, from eligible residents.
- Provide an application form which includes confirmation of eligibility and requests a brief statement outlining reasons for wishing to serve, and a personal profile.

The Council will set a closing date for applications to ensure a clear, fair and orderly process.

4. Eligibility

Applicants must meet the statutory criteria for parish councillors, including:

- Being at least 18 years old.
- Being a British, eligible Commonwealth, Irish, or qualifying EU citizen.
- Meeting at least one of the residency or qualification requirements (e.g., living in or within 3 miles of the parish, owning or occupying land, or working in the parish).

Applicants will be asked to confirm eligibility in the completed and signed application form.

5. Consideration of Applications

All valid applications will be considered at a properly convened meeting of the full Council. Discussion and voting must take place in **public session**, except where personal data considerations require brief exclusion.

The Council:

- Will invite candidates to attend the meeting, at which they may:
 - Offer each candidate the opportunity to make a short statement.
 - Ask questions to understand their interests, experience, and approach to the role.
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6. Voting Procedure

The Council will select a candidate by majority vote, following these principles:

- Voting will be conducted openly by show of hands, unless a Councillor requests a signed ballot and the request is resolved by a majority vote.
- A candidate must receive an **absolute majority** of councillors present and voting.
- If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no candidate receives a clear majority, the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated and further rounds held until a majority is achieved.
- When there are two candidates and there is an equal number of votes, the Chairman must use his casting vote.
- If there is only one candidate, a vote must still be taken. If they do not receive a majority vote, no co-option will be made, and the position must be readvertised.

If voting is for more than one vacancy, and there are more candidates than vacancies, they must be treated separately, in the order they came about, with the first appointment made from all candidates, the next from the remaining candidates and so on, so that *each* vacancy

arising from the loss of a *specific* Councillor is filled by the Co-option of a *specific* replacement.

A successful candidate is appointed immediately upon resolution.

7. Appointment and Acceptance of Office

- The successful candidate must:
 - Sign the **Declaration of Acceptance of Office** before participating in Council business.
 - Be provided with the Council's Code of Conduct and relevant induction materials.
 - Join the Council at the meeting where they are appointed or at the next convenient meeting.
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8. Criteria for Selection

- In making its decision, the Council will consider:
 - The applicant's understanding of local issues and community priorities.
 - Their willingness and ability to commit time to meetings and parish work.
 - Relevant skills, experience, or perspectives that would benefit the Council.
 - Their approach to teamwork, communication, and constructive engagement.
 - The Council will not discriminate unlawfully and will seek to encourage diversity of representation when advertising vacancies.
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9. Transparency and Record-Keeping

The Clerk will:

- Retain copies of applications in accordance with data protection requirements.
 - Record the co-option process and decision in the minutes.
 - Publish the name of the co-opted councillor once appointed.
 - Personal details of unsuccessful applicants will not be published.
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10. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.
