



Co-option Policy

Introduction

The Parish Council is able to co-opt new councillors after an election when all vacancies have not been filled; when a councillor resigns; is disqualified; or dies.

When co-opting a new councillor, the Parish Council should strive to achieve a balance of members living in all areas of the parish. Councillors should at all times represent the whole parish.

To ensure a fair and transparent process is undertaken, the following procedures will be carried out in both election and non-election years.

A. Procedures in a non-election year

1. On receipt of a resignation/notification of death of a councillor, the clerk will contact Breckland District Council to request a formal notice of vacancy. The clerk will display the notice on the Council's website, noticeboards and other prominent places in the parish. If after the statutory 14-day period a by-election has not been claimed by at least ten electors then the Parish Council is free to co-opt. The clerk will advise all members by email that the co-option procedure has commenced.

2. The clerk will ask prospective candidates to:

a. complete an application form (below) providing personal details and information to support their application for consideration by the councillors

b. confirm their eligibility for the position of councillor within the statutory rules by completing an Eligibility Form (below)

Copies of these forms will be circulated to all councillors in advance of the meeting at which these applications will be considered.

3. Prospective candidates will be asked to attend a Parish Council meeting at which their application will be considered.

4. In advance of the meeting prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a parish councillor and the nature of their duties. They will also be advised that the Parish Council is not obliged to co-opt any

member if it is felt that candidates are not suitable. The importance of regular attendance will be stressed, as well as the need to advise of absence from a meeting.

5. At the co-option meeting, candidates will be asked to introduce themselves to councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. The process will be carried out in public session and there will be no private discussions between councillors prior to a vote being taken. After candidates have finished giving their submissions, councillors will vote using a voting slip with all candidate names listed and select the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

6. In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an overall majority of votes cast. If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting, the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an overall majority.

7. After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected. The successful candidate will join the Council meeting as a councillor after signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Parish Councillor form.

8. If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are advertised again.

B. Procedures in an election year

If following the close of nominations at an ordinary election of the Parish Council there is a quorum of elected members but some outstanding vacancies, the clerk will advertise for interested candidates (as already detailed) after the date of the election.

The Council is able to co-opt any time after the election.

The procedures outlined from number 2 will then be followed.

This policy was adopted by the Parish Council in January 2022.

The policy will be reviewed in January 2024.