

Parish Council Co-option Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the procedure for the co-option of Parish Councillors to fill casual vacancies, ensuring a fair, transparent, and consistent approach that supports effective governance and community representation.

2. Legal Basis

Co-option is a lawful method of appointing a councillor to fill a casual vacancy where an election has not been called. A co-opted councillor has the same rights, duties, and responsibilities as an elected member.

3. Declaration of Vacancy

When a casual vacancy arises, the Parish Council will:

- Publicly advertise the vacancy in accordance with statutory requirements
- Invite applications from eligible members of the public

4. Advertisement of Vacancy

The Council will publish a notice inviting applications. This will include:

- Closing date for applications
- Interview date(s), where applicable
- Date of the Full Council meeting at which co-option will be considered
- Preferred format of interviews (normally in person)
- Advisory note that remote attendance may be subject to technical limitations
- Expectation that candidates make themselves available for scheduled interviews
- Encouragement for candidates to attend at least one Council meeting prior to applying (desirable but not mandatory)
- Encouragement for unsuccessful candidates to remain engaged in Council activities



5. Application Process

Applicants must submit:

- A written expression of interest to the Chief Officer by the specified deadline
- Information outlining relevant skills, experience, and reasons for applying

Where only one valid application is received for a single vacancy, the Council may proceed directly to co-option at a Full Council meeting. However, the Council is not obliged to appoint the candidate and may choose not to fill the vacancy at that time.

6. Co-option Panel

Where more than one application is received:

- A Co-option Panel will be established following discussion at a Full Council meeting
- Panel membership will consist of the Chief Officer and Councillors selected based on relevant experience (e.g. governance, recruitment, community engagement) not availability alone
- The Panel will act impartially and in the best interests of the Council

7. Assessment Framework

Prior to interviews, the Panel will:

- Agree the key competencies and attributes required for the role, such as:
 - Commitment to the community
 - Teamworking and collaboration
 - Communication skills
 - Integrity and accountability
- Use a **benchmarking approach** to assess candidates comparatively
- Avoid reliance on rigid scoring systems, instead focusing on structured discussion and evidence-based judgement

8. Interview Process

- Candidates will be invited to attend an interview of up to 30 minutes
- Interviews will normally take place in person; remote participation may be permitted where necessary
- Each candidate will:
 - Provide a brief introduction
 - Respond to questions from the Panel
- The Panel will:



- Use consistent but flexible questioning
- Encourage open discussion
- Focus on the candidate's motivation, skills, and potential contribution

9. Panel Deliberation and Recommendation

Following interviews:

- The Panel will deliberate collectively
- Candidates will be assessed comparatively, using the first interview as a reference point where appropriate
- The Panel will agree on a recommended candidate for co-option

10. Notification of Outcome

The Chief Officer or Panel Chair will:

- Notify the successful candidate
- Notify unsuccessful candidates and thank them for their interest
- Encourage unsuccessful candidates to remain involved in Council activities

11. Formal Co-option Decision

At the next Full Council meeting:

- A councillor must propose and another second the recommended candidate
- The Council will vote in accordance with Standing Orders

Voting procedure:

- Voting will be by show of hands
- An absolute majority is required for co-option

If no candidate receives a majority:

- The candidate with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated
- Voting will continue until one candidate achieves a majority

12. Declaration and Appointment

- The successful candidate will be declared co-opted
- They will be invited to join the meeting
- They will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office



13. Status of Co-opted Councillors

A co-opted councillor:

- Has the same rights and responsibilities as an elected councillor
- Is expected to adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct
- Will be subject to any statutory limitations regarding allowances

14. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective, transparent, and aligned with best practice.

HWPC Co-option Policy	Georgina Morgan - Denn	Adopted:	Next review due: