

Coffinswell Parish Council

Co-option Policy

Prepared by: Cllr N Orchard

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1. The need to co-opt a Parish Councillor

Parish Councillors are normally elected by the Parish at elections held at 4-yearly intervals, and will serve on the Council until the next election. However, there are two occasions when there will be a need to co-opt a new councillor. The first is when there are insufficient candidates standing for election to fill the available council seats – 6 with effect from 1 May 2023. The second occasion is when a council seat becomes vacant between elections due to a number of possible circumstances, e.g. resignation, moving away from the parish etc. In this instance there will initially be an opportunity for the Parish to demand an election, provided that a minimum of 10 parishioners formally request it within a deadline set by the Proper Officer. If no such request is made then the Parish Council may fill the vacancy by co-option.

2. The co-option process

There are no legal requirements for how the co-option process should be carried out. However, Coffinswell Parish Council will follow the guidelines issued by NALC in 'Legal Briefing L15-08 – Good practice for selection of candidates for co-option to local Councils'. Coffinswell Parish Council will endeavour to carry out the process in an open, transparent

and fair manner. The Council will endeavour to achieve a balanced, representative and inclusive composition of councillors regarding gender, age and other distinguishing attributes.

3. Advertising

Following confirmation from the Proper Officer that an election is not required, the Council will advertise the vacancy in the Parish and call for candidates to nominate themselves for co-option. Advertising will be by notices placed in the Parish noticeboards, on the Parish website and by other media options such as Facebook and email. The notices will give a deadline for applications of not less than 28 days following the deadline for the requests for election.

4. Self-nomination

Applications are to be made to the Parish Clerk, who will issue a 'Self-nomination for co-option form' to each applicant. The deadline for receipt of nomination forms by the Parish Clerk or by a serving Councillor will be that given on the co-option vacancy notice.

5. Review of applications by the Parish Council

Copies of the application forms will be distributed to Parish Councillors not less than 7 days before the date of the next full Parish Council meeting. Councillors are reminded that these forms are personal and confidential and should not be made public.

6. Co-option at the Parish Council Meeting

6.1 Personal statements

At the next full meeting of the Parish Council each candidate will be given the opportunity to speak to the meeting for a maximum of 3 minutes in support of their application. If they are unable to attend the meeting they may nominate someone to speak on their behalf. Alternatively they may ask for their Personal Statement to be read out from their self-nomination form. Councillors may question the candidates following their statements.

6.2 Closed meeting discussion of candidates

6.2.1 Following the Personal Statements the Parish Council will meet in a closed session for a maximum of 30 minutes to discuss the applications and to vote.

6.2.2 Councillors should declare a prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting where any existing relationship (of a personal or business nature) with a candidate may cause bias.

6.2.3 The Council is not obliged to co-opt and may decide that none of the candidates would be acceptable. In this case no voting will take place, the public meeting will be resumed and the meeting informed of the decision.

Steps to advertise for further co-options or hold an election to fill vacancies may be taken following the meeting.

6.3 Voting procedure

- 6.3.1 Each Councillor, including the Chair, will have one vote.
- 6.3.2 The winning candidate must gain an overall majority of votes. That is, they must have more votes than the total number of votes cast for all the other candidates.
- 6.3.3 If there is no overall majority for one candidate in the first round of voting then the candidate with the fewest votes, and any candidates with no votes, will be eliminated. If there are two or more candidates tied with the fewest votes then the Chair will have a casting vote on which candidate will be eliminated.
- 6.3.4 Voting will continue for the remaining candidates using the same procedure of elimination until one candidate has the required overall majority. If there is a tie for first place then the Chair will have a casting vote.
- 6.3.5 If there is more than one Council seat to be co-opted, then the voting will start again, excluding the winning candidate for the first seat. The process will be repeated until all seats have been filled by a majority vote.

6.4 Successful candidate offer and acceptance

The public meeting will resume once the voting procedure has concluded. The successful candidate(s) will be offered the opportunity to join the Council. If they accept, then they will be invited by the Clerk to sign the acceptance forms and will become Councillor(s) with immediate effect. If a successful candidate is not present at the meeting then the offer will be made after the meeting. They will become co-opted once they have signed the acceptance forms.

7. Term of office

The co-opted councillor(s) will serve until the next scheduled 4-yearly Council election.

Notes

This document is based upon a study of legislation, guidelines and practices of other Local Councils.

Unless otherwise specified, a period of days given in this document refers to total days including weekends and public holidays.