



Councillor Co-Option Policy

Purpose: To facilitate the co-option of councillors to West Wittering Parish Council in the event of a vacancy arising.

Adopted: WWPC Full Council Meeting

Minute Reference: 09(e)

Review: Spring 2028

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure compliance with legislation¹ and continuity of procedures in the co-option of councillors to West Wittering Parish Council.

The co-option procedure is managed by the council, and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

The co-option of a parish councillor occurs in two instances.

1. When an ordinary vacancy has arisen on a Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four (4) years.
2. When a casual vacancy has arisen and no poll (by-election) has been called.

Policy in non-election years

Where a casual vacancy arises on the Parish Council during a term of office, for example following resignation, death or disqualification of a councillor, and where no by-election has been called, the Council shall fill the vacancy by co-option using the following procedure.

- The Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing adverts on noticeboards, the council website and any other platforms considered suitable by the Clerk (Appendix A).
- The closing date for applications will be clearly advertised.
- Each candidate will be required to complete an application form including a declaration that they qualify and are not disqualified from being a councillor (Appendix B).
- Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a councillor and the nature of their duties (Appendix C).
- Candidates will be advised that the council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate if it is felt there is no suitable candidate.
- The co-option of a councillor shall be considered and determined by resolution at a properly convened meeting of the Parish Council, held in public².

¹ Local Government Act 1972, sections, 79,80,87 & 89 and the Representation of the People Act 1983

² Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, para 7, para10 and sections 100A(1)-(4) and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 section 1(1)



- At the meeting where the co-option takes place, candidates will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves to councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they would like to become a member of the council. Councillors will be able to ask questions.
- Once all the candidates have spoken, Councillors may discuss the discussion regarding co-option.
- Voting will be by a show of hands³ unless a recorded is demanded. For a candidate to be co-opted they must receive 50% +1 of the votes from members present. The Chair has the casting vote if the vote is tied.
- A councillor who is co-opted shall take office immediately upon signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- If insufficient or unsuitable candidates come forward, then the process will be repeated.
- The Clerk will update Chichester District Council Electoral Services, the website and other relevant documentation including committee membership, working groups and representatives to outside bodies as soon as practicable.

Policy in election years

Co-option may be required in an election year where an election is uncontested, leaves vacancies unfilled, or where a casual vacancy occurs following the ordinary elections. The Council will use the following procedure to fill such vacancy.

- The Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing adverts on noticeboards, the council website and any other platforms considered suitable by the Clerk (Appendix A).
- The closing date for applications will be clearly advertised.
- Each candidate will be required to complete an application form including a declaration that they qualify and are not disqualified from being a councillor (Appendix B).
- Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a councillor and the nature of their duties (Appendix C).
- Candidates will be advised that the council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate if it is felt there is no suitable candidate.
- The closing date for nominations will be noon, on the Monday after the election takes place and co-options considered at the first meeting of the Full Council following the election (usually the Annual Meeting) and will be the first item to be considered after the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council.
- Once all the candidates have spoken, Councillors may discuss the discussion regarding co-option.

³ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, para 39(1)-(2)



- Voting will be by a show of hands⁴ unless a recorded is demanded. For a candidate to be co-opted they must receive 50% +1 of the votes from members present. The Chair has the casting vote if the vote is tied.
- A councillor who is co-opted shall take office immediately upon signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- If insufficient or unsuitable candidates come forward, then the process will be repeated.
- The Clerk will update Chichester District Council Electoral Services, the website and other relevant documentation including committee membership, working groups and representatives to outside bodies as soon as practicable.

⁴ Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12, para 39(1)-(2)



Appendix A

West Wittering Parish Council

The Pavilion, Rookwood Road, West Wittering, Chichester, PO20 8LT

NOTICE OF CASUAL VACANCY

Notice is hereby given that due to the resignation/death/disqualification of Councillor XXX a vacancy has occurred among the Members of the Parish Council. Any person willing to fill this vacancy should apply to the Clerk in writing on or before XXX using the application form available from the Parish Council Office or from the website www.westwitteringparishcouncil.gov.uk.

The applicant's name must appear on the current register of Voters List or the applicant should during the whole of the twelve months preceding the relevant date have resided in or within three miles of the parish or the applicant's only place of work during the whole of the twelve months preceding the relevant date is in the parish.

The applicant must not be debarred from standing as a councillor.

Public elections cannot be held until the year XXXX but for the interim period the present sitting Councillors may co-opt to fill the vacancy.

Signature

Name of the Proper Officer
Clerk to West Wittering Parish Council
Date



Appendix B

West Wittering Parish Council

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Application to become a Parish Councillor

Name (inc, title):			
Email Address:			
Telephone Number:		Mobile No:	
Address:			
Postcode			
To comply with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 we will ensure all personal information supplied to us is held securely. We will ensure that any information given will only be held as long as necessary. The information provided will be used for the purposes of administering your application and will only be shared s the law permits or with your express consent,			

Please provide a short statement explaining the reasons why you wish to become a Parish Councillor and let us know what skills or experience you would bring to the Parish Council. The statement will be circulated to all councillors before the next council meeting.

Signed		Date:	



Membership of the Parish Council

In order to be eligible for co-optation as a West Wittering Parish Councillor, you must be a British Subject, or a Citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union; and be 18 years of age or over; and additionally, able to meet ONE of the qualifications set out below **(please tick ✓ which applies to you)**.

a) I am registered as a local government elector for the parish.	
b) I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-optation, occupied as owner or tenant, land or premises in the parish.	
c) My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish	
d) I have during the whole of twelve months resided in the parish or within three miles of it.	

Please note that under section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor if he/she:

- a) Holds any paid office or employment of the local council or of a joint committee on which the council is represented; or
- b) Is a person who had been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors; or
- c) Has within five years before the day of election, or since his/her election, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- d) Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

The disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:

- i) If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged; or
- ii) If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part; or
- iii) If the person is discharged without such a certificate.

In i and ii above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In iii, it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.



Appendix C

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Responsibilities and Duties of a Councillor

This appendix provides a concise summary of the roles, duties and responsibilities of Parish Councillors in England. It should be read alongside the Councils Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Members Code of Conduct.

Role of a Parish Councillor

A Parish Councillor is a local elected or co-opted officeholder who serves the whole community and acts collectively with fellow councillors as part of the corporate body of the Council.

Councillors are expected to:

- Represent the interests of the entire parish.
- Help set the council's strategic direction, policies and priorities.
- Act as a link between the community and the council.
- Uphold high standards of conduct in public office.
- Prepare for and attend meetings.
- Attend training to develop knowledge and skills.
- Be aware of and follow council policies and procedures.

Individual councillors have no authority to act or make decisions on behalf of the council unless specifically authorised by law.

Individual councillors should not be involved in the day-to day running and administration of the council.

Code of Conduct and Standards

Councillors must comply with the Parish Council's adopted Members Code of Conduct, which requires them to:

- Act with integrity, honesty and accountability.
- Treat others with respect.
- Avoid bringing the council into disrepute.
- Declare and manage interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests.

Collective Decision Making

The Parish Council acts as a corporate body. This means that:

- Decisions are made collectively at properly convened council or committee meetings.
- Councillors share responsibility for decisions lawfully made by the council.
- The principle of majority decision-making applies.