

Hooe Parish Council

CO-OPTION POLICY

1. Introduction

In the event of no election being called to fill a Councillor vacancy for Hooe Parish Council, the Council will co-opt membership to the Parish Council in accordance with legislation as defined in the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, SI 2006/3305 r 8(3) and the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, para 3. Due and fair consideration will be also be given to advice and guidance as provided by bodies such as (but not limited to) the National Association for Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and the East Sussex Association for Local Councils (ESALC). Hooe Parish Council will follow a process which is fair, open and transparent and in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

1.1 There are two circumstances under which the council may proceed to fill a casual vacancy by co-option:

- When a ward seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council (currently every four years)
- During the life of the council, a ward seat falls vacant but the required 10 electors of the ward have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period following publication of the notice of vacancy

1.2 The council is not obliged to co-opt to fill any vacancy. Even if the council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply.

1.3 However, it is not desirable that electors in a particular ward be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the council if there are insufficient Members to share the workload equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times.

1.4 To ensure a fair and transparent process is undertaken, this policy outlines the procedure to be followed by the council when co-option is considered.

2. Application process

2.1 On receipt of written notice from the Democratic Services Manager at Wealden District Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option:

- The Clerk will advertise the vacancy or vacancies to be filled by co-option.
- The co-option advertisement will include the closing date for acceptance of requests for consideration (between 7 and 30 days after the date of the advertisement) and the number of vacancies, and will be displayed on the council website, social media platforms and noticeboards.

2.2 Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s). Candidates found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

Date adopted 28.2.2022

2.3 Applicants for a vacancy will:

- Receive a New Councillor Application Pack and a copy of the Good Councillor Guide (produced by the National Association of Local Councils), the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation to be issued by the clerk.
- Submit information about themselves by completing a short application form, including a description of their interest in becoming a councillor and specifying any skills or qualifications which may benefit the council
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of councillor within the statutory rules, a copy of which will be attached to the application form

2.4 Copies of the applicant's application form will be circulated to all Members by the Clerk at least three clear working days prior to the Council meeting where the co-option will be considered. The application forms and any supporting documents will be treated by the Clerk and Members as strictly confidential.

2.5 Candidates will be sent a full agenda of the meeting at which they are to be considered for appointment, and will be informed they may, if they so wish speak for up to **2 minutes** about their application during the co-option item on the agenda at the meeting. The co option will be the first item on the agenda.

3. Voting procedure

3.1 Voting will be according to the agreed procedure in standing orders, namely:

'Where more than 2 persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. Any tie may be settled by the Chairman's casting vote.'

3.2 Voting will be conducted as per the agreed procedure in standing orders, namely:

'Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on any question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda. At the request of two Councillors, voting on any question shall be by a signed ballot.'

3.3 If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution, but if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes

3.4 After the vote has been concluded, the chairman will declare the successful candidate(s) duly elected. A Member elected by co-option is a full member of the council but is not eligible for the basic parish allowance.

4 Acceptance of office

4.4 The successful candidate(s) **must sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office** before they can act as a councillor. The Declaration of Acceptance shall include the words 'As a member of Hooe Parish Council, I will agree to operate in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and all Policies adopted by Hooe parish council'.

4.5 The Register of Members Interests form must be completed and returned to the clerk within 14 days, whereby the Clerk will forward a copy to the District Monitoring Officer within 28 days as required by statutory requirements.

4.6 At the earliest convenient date, the elected member will meet with the clerk for an induction to cover procedural matters related to the running of the parish council, and to receive a operational manual detailing the policies, procedures and other relevant key documents. council.

4.7 All new members will be required to undertake councillor training at the earliest opportunity, but no later than six months after becoming an elected member of Hooe Parish Council. The councillor training will be organised by the clerk.