

LONGCOT PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Policy

Issue 1

Issue History.

- Issue 1 Adopted 13/06/2024 minute 82/24.

Purpose.

The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council exercises the power to co-opt a person on to Council to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures. The co-option procedure is managed entirely by Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

Co-Option.

The co-option of a parish councillor occurs when:

- An ordinary vacancy has arisen on council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
- A casual vacancy has arisen on council and no poll (by election) has been called.

Ordinary vacancy.

An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidate who was nominated are automatically elected to council and any remaining vacancies are known as 'ordinary vacancies'. Provided there are enough parish councillors to constitute a quorum, council can usually co-opt 35 days after the date of the ordinary election to fill the vacancy. The quorum for council is five.

Casual vacancy.

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- A councillor resigns;
- A councillor dies;
- A councillor becomes disqualified; or
- A councillor fails for six months to attend a meeting when summoned to do so and their apologies are not accepted.

Council must notify the Vale of the White Horse District Council of a casual vacancy and then give public notice of the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. An election occurs when 10 electors write to the Vale of the White Horse District Council stating that an election is requested.

If a by-election is called, a polling station is organised by the Vale of the White Horse District Council and polling cards sent to residents. The Council pays the cost of the election.

If more than one candidate is nominated, a by-election will take place. When there is only one candidate they are duly elected without a ballot.

If within 14 days of the public notice being posted ten residents do not request a ballot, the Vale of the White Horse District Council will inform the Council that it can proceed with co-option as follows:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the council's noticeboard and website.
- Advise council that the co-option policy has been instigated.

Eligibility of candidates.

Council can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that they are:

- At least 18 years old;
- A British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the European Union and meet at least one of the following four qualifications:
 - a. Are registered on the parish electoral register; or
 - b. Reside in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the parish;
 - c. Principal place of work is in the parish; or
 - d. Live within 3 miles (direct of the parish).

There are certain disqualifications for election, as follows:

- Holding a paid office under the local authority;
- Bankruptcy;
- Have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or month (whether suspended or not), without the option of a fine, during the five years preceding the election;
- Being disqualified under any enactment in relation to corrupt or illegal practice.

Eligibility of the candidate will be confirmed at full council by the Clerk.

Applications.

Candidates will be requested to:

- Attend a least one Council meeting as an observer;
- Confirm their eligibility of the position of parish councillor within the statutory rules and submit information about themselves, by way of completing appendix 1 available from the clerk;
- At the next full council meeting there will be an agenda item 'To receive and consider written applications for the office of parish council for the ward of and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy'.

Copies of the eligible candidates application will be circulated to all councillors by the clerk with the supporting papers of the full council agenda prior to the meeting, when the co-option is to be considered.

All such documents will be treated by the clerk and all councillors as strictly private and confidential.

At the full Council co-option meeting.

Candidates will have five minutes to introduce themselves to members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of Longcot Parish Council. Note: if a candidate is unable to attend the meeting the application can still be considered, and voting will be based on the application alone.

There will be no private discussions between members prior to a vote being taken. Note: where the council is discussing the merits of a candidate and personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and council should resolve to exclude members of the press and public.

Within the open session of the meeting members will vote on the acceptability of each candidate, the vote will be by a show of hands. An absolute majority vote is required for each candidate from all members present and entitled to vote (50% +1 of the votes available at the meeting). When there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will take place with the process repeated until a candidate had an absolute majority. The Chair has the casting vote. Votes cannot be made by proxy.

If present the co-opted candidate will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, including an undertaking to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and may take office thereafter. If the co-opted candidate is not present, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office would be signed either before or at the next full council meeting.

The clerk would notify the Vale of the White Horse District Council Electoral Services of the co-option of the new parish councillor.

The co-opted parish councillor will complete a Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests form which the Clerk will lodge with the Monitoring Officer at The Vale of White Horse District Council within 28 days of the co-option.

If insufficient candidates are co-opted, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

Review date each new council term, every 4 years.

Co-opted Councillor Person Specification

Co-opted Councillor person specification.

The following qualities are advantageous for a Parish Councillor to have or be prepared to gain:

Personal attributes.

- Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.
- Forward thinking skills.
- Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the council.

Experience, skills, knowledge and ability.

- Ability to listen constructively.
- Prepare for meetings by reading agendas and supporting papers.
- Good team player.
- Solid interest in local matters.
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and the parish.
- Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others views and accept majority decisions.
- Ability to communicate clearly.
- Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff.
- Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other Parish Councils, principal authority, charities).
- Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training.
- Willingness to acquire a basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish Councils or local authorities.

Circumstances.

- Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) mainly in the evenings..
- Flexible and committed to the Council.
- Enthusiastic.

Councillor Eligibility

Full Name			
Address			
		Post Code	
Home phone number		Mobile number	
Email			
Legal qualifications for being a Parish Councillor.			
To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to both of the following questions:			
Are you a British or Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country?			Yes / No
Are you 18 years of age or over?			Yes / No
To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to at least one of the following questions:			
Are you on the Parish electoral register for the Parish of Longcot?			Yes / No
Have you lived in the Parish of Longcot, or within 3 miles of its boundary, for at least a year?			Yes / No
Have you been the owner or tenant of land or other premises in the Parish of Longcot for at least a year?			Yes / No
Have you had your principal or only place of work in the Parish of Longcot for at least a year?			Yes / No
Disqualifications.			
You must be able to answer 'No' to all of the questions below to be eligible to serve as a councillor.			
Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order?			Yes / No
Have you, within the last five years, been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period three months or more without option of a fine?			Yes / No
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?			Yes / No
Are you subject to any relevant notification requirements or a relevant order in relation to a sexual offence (as set out in the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022)?			Yes / No

Please briefly outline why you are interested in being a Parish Councillor:

Please tell us something about the life experience you will bring to the Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business or trade union experience:

Please tell us about the skills you feel you would bring to the Council, for example, professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise:

Are there any questions you would like to ask the council?

<p>Are you prepared to undertake Parish Councillor training within Oxfordshire? Please note that the majority of Council meetings are held in the evening and, unfortunately, under present legislation, the Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of Councillors' childcare or care of dependents.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
<p>Declaration of consent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I declare that I am eligible to become a Parish Councillor in the Parish of Longcot and I certify that the contents of this application form are true and correct. • I consent to my details being retained if I am co-opted as a Councillor. • I consent to having a Parish Council email address and to receiving Parish Council documentation via electronic means. • I consent to my name and email being published on the councils website. <p>Signed.....Date.....</p> <p>Print.....</p>	

Please also see the Councils website at www.Longcotparishcouncil.org.uk

Please return the completed form to:

Tina Brock
Clerk to Longcot Parish Council
clerk@Longcotparishcouncil.org.uk
07971 521242