

Stow Bardolph Parish Council Co-option Policy

Scope and purpose

This policy aims to explain the procedure regarding co-option. The information contained in it is to be used by members of the council and members of the public. The aim of the policy is also to show that the council endeavours to treat all applicants fairly and alike, and to ensure that the process is also seen as fair, open and transparent. This policy also details the processes to be followed regarding co-option.

When a vacancy arises

A co-option vacancy arises when a member of the Council leaves, and the position is formally advertised for 14 days. At the end of this 14-day period if an insufficient number of local electors have submitted a request to the District / Borough Council to call for an election then the Council can fill the vacancy by co-option.

Applications

Applications will be encouraged from anyone in the parish who is eligible to stand. Councillors or parishioners can approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option. Co-option vacancies will be advertised on the website and on the noticeboards and in media releases. The advertisement for the co-option will include:

- Method by which applications can be made
- The closing date for applications
- Contact point for potential candidates to obtain more information

When applications are received, the Clerk will confirm eligibility. Any candidate found to be offering inducements will be disqualified.

Attendance following an application

All eligible candidates shall be invited to attend the next council meeting following the application deadline. They will be asked to confirm their attendance at the meeting. In the event of candidates being unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged. All members receive copies of applications ahead of the meeting. Applications are to be treated as confidential. A candidate, on confirming that they will attend the meeting will be sent a copy of the agenda and agenda papers.

Commitment

The council is keen that potential candidates understand the commitment which is required from councillors. Anyone interested in standing will be encouraged to look at the website for more information on the role of being a councillor and will receive an information sheet on the work of the council. Candidates will also be told that they are expected to attend an induction training.

The process of Co-option at the Council meeting

There is an early agenda item at which each candidate will be asked to make a brief verbal presentation on why they would like to be a councillor and the skills they can offer the council (3 minutes maximum per candidate). All of this, including the voting for the candidate will be in public. Candidates may be asked questions by members. In the event of a candidate being unable to attend, his / her application will still be considered by members. In the event of a candidate being related to a councillor, then the councillor would be expected to declare an interest and request a dispensation to speak and vote.

Voting

Only councillors present at the meeting may vote. There will be one vote per vacancy to be filled (Chairman may have a casting vote). The successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again. The process is to be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

Starting as a councillor

The successful candidate(s) are asked to start as a councillor immediately after completing their declarations of acceptance of office. If an absent candidate is successful, members must agree to him / her signing the declaration of acceptance of office before or at the very start of the next meeting. New councillors will also be made aware of the fact that Register Interests Forms will need to be completed within 28 days of co-option.

Date of adoption of this policy: 11th July 2023

Date to be reviewed: July 2025