

# Casual Vacancies and Co-Option Policy



## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the event of a vacancy occurring due to the resignation, death or ineligibility of a Councillor, the Clerk will immediately inform the Democracy Officer at Telford & Wrekin Council (TWC) and supply them with a copy of the requisite Notice of Vacancy for posting.

The Chair will advise the Council at the next Full Council meeting of the vacancy.

A notice of the vacancy will be displayed on the Parish Council notice board, on the Parish Council website and in any other location as practical. If an election is not called within the specified time period the council can fill the casual vacancy by co-option.

On receipt of written notification from the Democracy Officer at TWC that a casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Clerk will place a notice announcing that the vacancy(ies) can be filled by co-option and invite expressions of interest. The notice will be placed on the noticeboards and the Parish Council website and will include:

- A contact point so that people considering putting their names forward for co-option can obtain more information on the role of a parish councillor
- Contact details to where expressions of interest should be made (usually the Clerk, via email or hard copy)

Of paramount importance is that all applicants are treated alike so that arrangements are seen to be open, fair and transparent. This policy sets out the process to be followed by Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council (SBPC) when co-option is under consideration.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, SBPC will seek and encourage applications from anyone who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor (see section 2). Councillors and parishioners can legally approach individuals to suggest they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option and encourage them to register their expression of interest.

The Parish 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.

Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements or any kinds of undue pressure will be disqualified.

It is not desirable that electors of the Parish be left partially or unrepresented for a significant length of time; neither does it contribute to the effective and efficient working of the Parish Council if there are insufficient Councillors to share the workload equitably, provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests, or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at time. However, this must not be used as an excuse to co-opt and the vacancy will remain an agenda item until filled.

Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Parish Council.

## 2. PROCEDURE FOR CO-OPTION

Applications for co-option will be sought from residents who meet the qualifying criteria which are:

- They must be a British or Commonwealth Citizen, citizen of the Republic of Ireland or EU state member state citizen
- Over 18
- Registered as a local government elector for the parish; and or
- Have lived, or occupied land as an owner or tenant, or have their principal place of work in, or within 3 miles of the parish for a period not less than 12 months.

Disqualifying criteria are as below:

- Hold paid office with the Council
- Are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- Have in the last 5 years been convicted of an offence and sentenced to not less than 3 months imprisonment.
- Have been convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices
- Have been convicted for failure to register or declare disclosable interests.

Interested applicants should apply to the Parish Clerk. At the next scheduled Full Council meeting, candidates will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves and explain why they think they will be an effective Councillor. Their presentation should include:

- A demonstration on how they believe they have the support of their community.
- Their skills and experiences and in particular those relevant to the Council
- Their ability to drive and manage the changes which the Council may wish to make.

Members will then be asked to vote by means of a signed ballot paper for their preferred candidate. To be selected the candidate must receive a majority of all votes; if an absolute majority is not reached in the first round the candidate with the least votes will be removed from the ballot and another vote taken. This process will continue until one candidate receives the majority of votes.

The successful candidate will be asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office prior to taking office.

The successful candidate will also confirm that they will comply with and abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

Presented to Council on 14 November 2023

Resolved to be Adopted as at 14 November 2023

Review November 2024