

Stocksfield Parish Council

Co-option of Parish Councillors

1. Introduction

The co-option of Parish Councillors can occur either where a vacancy remains after an election or where the resignation of a councillor causes a 'casual vacancy' to occur. This policy assumes that, where a casual vacancy has arisen, the Clerk has complied with the statutory requirements that will allow co-option to proceed lawfully. This policy applies to all co-options. However where after an election the Council is quorate but, due to the number of vacancies, there is a risk to the continuation of the provision of services by the Council, the co-option of new councillors can be agreed immediately.

2. Co-option process

The Clerk will advertise the existence of a vacancy on the Council's notice boards and website, inviting interested parties to apply to the Council for consideration of co-option. Applications for co-option must be received by the Council at least five clear working days before the next Council meeting at which the co-option will be considered. The application must be written (including email) and must contain a personal statement which includes:

- Any relevant information about the applicant
- Why the applicant is interested in becoming a councillor
- Confirmation that the applicant is not disqualified from holding office as a councillor and is also qualified to do so.

If no applications are received, the Council will continue to advertise the vacancy and will consider any applications as they are submitted. However in order to be considered at a Parish Council meeting, an application must be received at least five clear working days before the meeting.

Candidates do not exceed the number of vacant seats

Where the number of applicants does not exceed the number of vacant seats, each applicant in turn must be proposed and seconded by a member and then must receive a majority of those present and voting in order to be co-opted.

Candidates exceed the number of vacant seats

Where there are more applicants than vacant seats, each applicant will be invited to attend the Council meeting where co-option of applicants is listed on the agenda. Members will first determine whether the matter, including any subsequent voting, needs to be considered as a confidential item and may resolve to exclude the press and public. The applicants will be invited to answer individually a set of predetermined questions and once each candidate has done so, they will leave the meeting. Where an applicant is unable or unwilling to attend in person, the written personal statement will be considered. Members are entitled to consider any reasonable explanation for being unable to attend the meeting. Members will then have an opportunity to discuss the applicants before a vote is taken.

In order to be considered for co-option each candidate must be proposed and seconded by a member. Each member may propose or second no more candidates than the number of vacant seats. Each member may vote for no more candidates than the number of vacant seats. Voting will be by show of hands but will be recorded by the Clerk to ensure that no member inadvertently votes for more candidates than there are vacant seats. The voting of individual members will not be recorded in the minutes unless a member invokes paragraph 2.15 of Standing Orders.

Where one or more candidates (up to the number of vacant seats) secures a majority of votes cast compared to other candidates they will be co-opted. Where one or more seats remain vacant after this process, the candidate with the least number of votes shall be removed from the list and a fresh vote taken of the remaining candidates, again with members voting for no more candidates than the number of vacant seats. The process will be repeated until the vacant seats are filled.

Where after the first vote, all candidates receive the same number of votes, the Chair may use a casting vote (under paragraph 2.16 of Standing Orders) to elect one candidate to the Council before a second vote is taken.

Providing information to applicants

In all cases of co-option, the candidate(s) will be notified of the outcome of their application by email as soon as practicable after the close of the meeting.

Where a person is co-opted as a councillor, they may take their seat immediately but must first complete a 'Declaration of Acceptance of Office'.

Adoption and review history	
Adopted at Parish Council Meeting on	09/05/16
Reviewed on	02/11/20
Amended on	14/07/21
Reviewed on	04/03/24
Next Review Due	04/03/26