

# HELPRINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY

**Adopted:** 11/12/25

**Minute number:** 136/26

**Review:** Every four years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or council procedures.

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This policy sets out the process the Parish Council will follow when filling a councillor vacancy by co-option, in accordance with relevant legislation. Its aim is to ensure a fair, open, and transparent approach.

1. Co-option will be considered when:

- A casual vacancy has been declared, and
- The Returning Officer has confirmed that no election has been called.

2. The Parish Council will:

- Advertise the vacancy on the council website, noticeboards, and any other appropriate local platforms.
- Provide information on the role of a councillor and how to apply.
- Specify a deadline for applications.

3. Applicants must meet the legal qualifications for being a parish councillor. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Being at least 18 years old, and
- Meeting one of the standard qualification criteria (e.g., residency, employment, or land ownership within the parish).

4. Applicants will be asked to complete an application form confirming eligibility requirements and including a short written expression of interest including their skills, experience, and reasons for wanting to serve. This form will be circulated to all councillors prior to the next Parish Council meeting.

5. There will be a separate item on the Parish Council meeting agenda to deal with the application/applications for co-option.

- Applicants will be invited to attend the Parish Council meeting for a short interview during which they may be asked to speak briefly about their interest in the role. Councillors may ask questions relevant to the duties of a parish councillor.
- If an applicant does not present themselves to the Parish Council meeting and they cannot provide a valid reason for not attending, then they will not be considered for the vacancy/vacancies at that meeting.
- If thought necessary, the Parish Council will resolve to exclude members of the press and public, including the candidates, under the Local Government Act Schedule 12A and the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to enable it to discuss the merits or otherwise of the applicants.

7. Voting Procedure

- Co-option will be decided by a vote of the council at a properly convened meeting and in open session.
- Voting will be by a show of hands or a signed ballot as determined by the chair.

- A candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes from councillors present and voting.
- If no candidate receives a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes will be eliminated and further rounds of voting will be held.
- No proxy votes are allowed.
- The Chair may exercise their casting vote if there is an equality of votes.
- The Chair will declare the result and the Clerk will record this in the Minutes.

8. Once appointed the successful candidate must:

- Sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- Complete, and submit to the Clerk, a Register of Members' Interests.
- The Clerk will notify the Returning Officer of the appointment and submit the completed Register of Members' Interest form within 28 days of acceptance of office.

9. The successful candidate will be provided (or directed to where these can be found on the Parish Council website) a copy of each of the following:

- The Parish Council's Standing Orders;
- The Parish Council's Financial Regulations;
- The Parish Council's Code of Conduct;
- The Good Councillors Guide.

10. The successful candidate will be encouraged to undertake training courses paid for by the Parish Council and provided by Lincolnshire Association of Local Councils (LALC).

11. Councillors must respect applicant confidentiality where appropriate. Decisions will be made solely on merit and suitability for the role, without discrimination.