



WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL Co-Option Policy

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Wootton Parish Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Parish 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 in two instances:

1. When an ordinary vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
2. When a casual vacancy has arisen on the Parish 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 the Parish Council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidates who were nominated are automatically elected to the Parish Council and any remaining vacancies are known as “ordinary vacancies”. Provided there are enough parish councillors to constitute a quorum, the Parish Council is usually able to co-opt a volunteer to fill the vacancies.

Casual vacancy

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his/her 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 (6) months to attend meetings of a council committee or sub- committee or to attend as a representative of the council a meeting of an outside body.

The Parish Council has to notify the District Council of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors for the ward the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten (10) electors write to the District Council stating that an election is requested.

If a by-election is called, a polling station will be set up by The Vale of White Horse District Council and the people of the ward will be asked to go to the polls to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of a nomination paper. The Parish Council will pay the costs of the election. The people of the ward have fourteen days (not including weekends, bank holidays and other notable days), to claim the by-election, but the Electoral Services Office of The Vale of White Horse District Council will advise the Clerk of the closing date.

If more than one (1) candidate is then nominated a by-election takes place but if only one (1) candidate is put forward they are duly elected without a ballot.

If ten (10) residents do not request a ballot within fourteen (14) days of the vacancy notice being posted, as advised by the Electoral Services Office, the Parish Council is able to co-opt a volunteer.



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CONFIRMATION OF CO-OPTION

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option. The Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks or such other period as the Parish Council may agree on the Parish Council notice boards and/or website

This procedure will also apply in the case of an ordinary vacancy where the Electoral Services Office has confirmed that there were insufficient nominations to fill all the seats but there are sufficient parish councillors elected to constitute a quorum.

ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES

The Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- he/she is 18 or over; and
- he/she is a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union;

and at least one of the following apply:

- he/she is an elector for the Parish and continues to be an elector; or
- has resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish; or
- has had his/her principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months; or
- has lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.

There are certain disqualifications for being a parish councillor, of which the main are (see s80 of the Local Government Act 1972):

- holding a paid office or employment under the Parish Council;
- bankruptcy;
- having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the preceding five years; or
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

APPLICATIONS

Candidates will be requested to:

- Attend at least one Parish Council meeting as observers;
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of parish councillor within the statutory rules and submit information about themselves, by way of completing an application form available from the Clerk
- Following receipt of applications, the next suitable Parish Council meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy'. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.

Copies of the eligible candidates' applications will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Clerk at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full Parish Council, when the co-option will be considered.



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

AT THE CO-OPTION MEETING

At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves to the parish councillors (members), give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. The process will be carried out in the public session and there will be no private discussions between members prior to a vote being taken. However, where the Parish Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Parish Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.

As soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions, the Parish Council will proceed to a vote with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance (as defined in the Standing Orders) and a vote by a show of hands (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 13).

A recorded vote may be requested under Standing Order 9 so as to show whether each councillor present and voting, gave his/her vote for or against that question.

In order for a candidate to be co-opted to the Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process.

Further rounds of voting will then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority.

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

The Clerk will notify The Vale of White Horse District Council Electoral Services Office 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.



CO-OPTED COUNCILLOR PERSON SPECIFICATION

Personal Attributes

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

Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability

- Ability to listen constructively
- A good team player
- An interest in local matters
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community
- 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 meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends.

APPENDIX A

Full Name			
Address			
		Post Code:	
Home Telephone:		Mobile Phone:	
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 Wootton?	Yes / No
Have you lived in the Parish of Wootton, 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 Wootton for at least a year?	Yes / No
Have you had your principal or only place of work in the Parish of Wootton for at least a year?	Yes / No
DISQUALIFICATIONS	
You must be able to answer 'No' to all of the following questions 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
Disqualification from being elected a member is set out in Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972	

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 you prepared to undertake Parish Councillor training within Oxfordshire?	Yes / No
Please note that the majority of Council meetings are held in the evening and, unfortunately, under present legislation, the Parish Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of Councillors' childcare or care of dependents.	
Wootton Parish Council meetings take place on the first Tuesday of every month from 7.30pm in the Community Centre (excluding August and December).	
Declaration and Consent	
<p>I declare that I am eligible to become a Parish Councillor in the Parish of Wootton and I certify that the contents of this application form are true and correct.</p> <p>I consent to my details being retained if I am co-opted as a Councillor.</p> <p>I consent to having a Parish Council email address and to receiving Parish Council documentation via electronic means.</p> <p>I consent to my name, address and telephone number being published together with my Parish Council email address.</p>	

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Please also see the Parish Council Website at:
<http://www.woottondrysandfordshippon.co.uk/wootton-parish-council/>

Please return the completed form and CV (if desired) to:

Mrs Wendy Quigley
Wootton Parish Clerk
32 Lamborough Hill
Wootton
OX13 6BZ
parish.clerk.woottonpc@gmail.com
07850 577122