WOLDINGHAM

PARISH   COUNCIL

Co-option Procedure for a New Councillor

This procedure is based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 – Good practice for selection of candidates for co-option to local Councils.

Parish Councils are permitted to exercise the power to co-opt a person on to the Council to fill a vacancy when the requirements to hold an election have not been met (i.e. The vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and fewer than 10 registered electors have requested an election by a deadline date specified by the District Returning Officer).

Although seeking 'expressions of interest' is not a legal requirement, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) recommends that Councils always give public notice of vacancies because this makes the process of co-option open and transparent and should attract more potential candidates.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, Woldingham Parish Council will:

1. Advertise the vacancy to seek and encourage 'expressions of interest' by a specified date from anyone in the Parish who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor. The notice will as a minimum be published on the Parish Notice Boards, Website and Facebook for a minimum of 21 days. All potential candidates will be requested to submit a short letter on why they should be considered for the vacancy. The letters will be circulated to members of the Parish Council along with the agenda for the next month council meeting. Please note that all Councillors are required to provide contact details (telephone and/or email) for publication on the Parish website. Parish Council e-mail addresses are provided.

2. At the next monthly council meeting:

   i.   Candidates to be invited to address the Council in the Public Participation section.
   ii.   All following steps to be taken in private section of meeting.
   iii.   Clerk to confirm that each candidate is qualified to become a Councillor and is not disqualified from being a Councillor as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 s79 and s80;
   iv.   Chairman to offer opportunity for debate on the order of priority to offer co-option

v.   Vote on the acceptability of each candidate for co-option, using the 'person specification' criteria set out in Annex A below and the letter completed by the candidates. vi. vii.

vi.   An absolute majority vote is required for each candidate from all members present and entitled to vote (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39) (The applicant with the lowest number of votes cast will be disqualified and the vote repeated. Until the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies)

vii.   Vote to select the order in which acceptable candidates (decided by the vote at iii above) should be approached to offer co-option on this occasion.

3. The Clerk to approach and offer co-option to candidate(s) after the meeting in the order of priority determined by the vote at vii above. If the first choice does not accept the post then the second is to be approached and so on until the ranking list is exhausted.

4. Once the candidate offered co-option accepts, the Clerk to notify the Parish Council and the Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' on the Parish Council website.

5. If no one accepts the vacant post(s), the whole process is to be repeated when new individuals expressing interest are identified or until the next election.

Adopted by Woldingham Parish Council

Date : 26 June 2024

Job Description and Person Specification

Role Parish Councillor

Responsible to All people resident within the Parish

Regular liaison with other councillors, local authorities, residents

Period of service Up to four years with possible extension and subject to election

Salary This is a voluntary position with some expenses payable in certain cases.

Annex A

Key Responsibilities

•   Representing the views of all residents within the parish

- Running local services which currently include: open spaces, environmental maintenance, community events. Other services and facilities may be added in future.
- Deciding on how much to raise through council tax in order to deliver the council's services. • Influencing and shaping the long term development of the parish, and as part of the planning process, commenting on planning applications in the parish.
- Improving the quality of life and the environment in the local area.
- Working to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents you represent.
- Working to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies.

Person Specification

- Councillors must meet the eligibility criteria specified in the Local Government Act 1972 section 79 and must not be disqualified by any provision of section 80 of the same Act.
- Councillors should ideally be residents of the parish, but if not must live within3 miles of the Parish.
- Councillors must be available to attend meetings on the evening of the last Wednesday of every month (August and December excepted), unless able to submit a reason for non-attendance that is accepted by the Council at the meeting. Further attendance is required at occasional ad hoc meetings, and to assist in the running of community events such as Christmas lights switch-on. • Councillors must be able to work productively with fellow Councillors, the Parish Clerk, and local representatives from the Police, County Council, schools, community groups etc.
- Councillors must be accessible to residents, and encourage them to raise issues and participate in finding resolutions,
- Councillors must abide by the Code of Conduct and declare personal interests both routinely and in respect of specific projects or proposals. They must prioritise the interests of the parish as a whole over those of individuals or themselves. They must abide by all policies and procedures of the Council.
- Development support is available for new Councillors, including dedicated training events, peer groups and published resources.