



BISHOPSTOKE PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY

**This Co-Option Policy was adopted
at the Council meeting on
10th March 2026**

**D Wheal
Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council**

BISHOPSTOKE PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY

Amendment Sheet

Amendment No.	Date Incorporated	Subject
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CO-OPTION POLICY

1 Introduction

- 1.1** Although the process for co-option to vacancies of local councils is not prescribed in law, the use of co-option is covered in the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006. NALC's Advice Note on Vacancies and Co-option (last updated 8 July 2022) provides guidance.
- 1.2** 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 Bishopstoke Parish Council when co-option is under consideration.
- 1.3** Whenever the need for co-option arises, Bishopstoke Parish Council will seek and encourage applications from anyone who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor (see section 3). 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.
- 1.4** In the event that a casual vacancy is not required to be filled by election (see section 2.3) the Parish Council "must, as soon as practicable . . . co-opt a person to fill a vacancy" (Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rule 2006 (s5 p5).
- 1.5** Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements or any kind of undue pressure will be disqualified.
- 1.6** Councillors elected by co-option are full members of the Parish Council.

2 Co-Option Process

- 2.1** In the event of a vacancy occurring due to the resignation, death or ineligibility of a Councillor, the Clerk will immediately inform the Monitoring Officer at Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC), and supply them with a copy of the requisite Notice of Vacancy for posting.
- 2.2** Should the requisite 10 electors of the Parish have not called for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period (currently 14 days) following the publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Parish Clerk is notified by EBC that the vacancy(ies) may be filled by co-option. The Parish Council will then seek to fill the vacancy as soon as possible. However, if the vacancy has occurred in the six months prior to the next Parish Council elections it may choose to leave the vacancy unfilled.

- 2.3** On receipt of written notification from the Monitoring Officer at EBC 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 on the Parish Councils website, and will include:
- 2.3.1** 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.
 - 2.3.2** Contact details to where expressions of interest should be made (usually the Clerk, via email or hard copy).
 - 2.3.3** A deadline for receipt of applications should be set, being no less than two weeks and no more than one month from the date the notice is placed, with applications to be considered at the following Full Council meeting.
- 2.4** The Council is not obliged to fill the vacancy just because it has received valid applications. If no candidate receives the required votes then no candidate is elected.

3 Qualifications / Disqualifications

- 3.1** To qualify a prospective candidate should:
- 3.1.1** Be an elector for the Parish; or
 - 3.1.2** Have resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land or other premises in the parish; or
 - 3.1.3** Had their principal place of work in the parish; or
 - 3.1.4** Lives within three miles (direct) of the Parish.
- 3.2** Part 5 s.80 of the Local Government Act 1972 lists reasons why a candidate may be disqualified. The main reasons are:
- 3.2.1** Holding a paid office under the authority; or
 - 3.2.2** Bankruptcy; or
 - 3.2.3** 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 five years preceding the election; or
 - 3.2.4** Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

4 Application Process

- 4.1** When expressions of interest are received, the Clerk will provide all applicants with full instructions on how to apply. All necessary information and forms will also be available to download from the Parish Council's website.
- 4.2** The Clerk will then consider completed forms to check that the individual(s) meets with the qualification requirements.
- 4.3** All candidates are asked to complete the forms and redacted copies will be circulated to all Parish Councillors with the agenda packs prior to a full meeting of the Council where the co-option is to be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and Councillors as strictly private and confidential.
- 4.4** Co-option Candidates will be informed of the date of the meeting at which the Parish Council will make its decision based on the application form submitted. Notice of the Intention to consider Co-option will be included on the agenda as a separate item at a Parish Council meeting.
- 4.5** Candidates will be invited to the meeting to introduce themselves and speak in support of their application. It will also provide Councillors with the opportunity to seek, through the Chair, clarification on submissions within the application form that they are not sure of, or the Council may decide to rely on the written submissions alone.

5 Consideration of applications

- 5.1** Candidates who do not attend the meeting will not be eligible for co-option at that meeting. In the event of vacancies remaining unfilled by the end of the meeting, applications that were not able to be considered due to non-attendance may be carried forward to the next meeting.
- 5.2** Only Councillors present at the meeting may vote upon a person to fill the vacancy. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
- 5.3** If a Councillor is a relative of a candidate, or has connections with any candidate which may be perceived as prejudicial, that Councillor should declare an interest and withdraw from the meeting. Under any of these circumstances a vote by the Councillor concerned is not allowed.
- 5.4** It is advisable that the co-option process be conducted in open business, although it is permissible to move to confidential business if the Council feel it necessary.
- 5.5** Each candidate will be allocated up to 3 minutes to address the Council on their application. Councillors will then have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidate. Other candidates and members of the public attending the meeting may remain throughout the process, except in the event of a successful motion to move to confidential business.

- 5.6** Once all candidates have had an opportunity to speak and answer questions, voting will take place and will be conducted as follows:
- 5.6.1** Each vacancy will be taken in turn and dealt with fully before the next is considered.
 - 5.6.2** Each Councillor will have one vote per vacancy. Votes are only cast in support of candidates, not against. Councillors are not required to cast their vote for any candidate if they feel that there is no candidate they can support.
 - 5.6.3** In order to be considered eligible a candidate must be both proposed and seconded. There is no obligation for any councillor to propose or second a candidate. A Councillor may only propose or second one candidate per vacancy.
 - 5.6.4** All candidates successfully proposed and seconded for the vacancy will then be voted upon. Candidates will be voted upon in alphabetical order by last name.
 - 5.6.5** Voting will be by show of hands unless a motion for a recorded vote is passed. In all votes, in the event of a tie the Chair may choose to exercise a casting vote.
 - 5.6.6** It is expected that if a Councillor has proposed or seconded a candidate then they will vote for them. In the event that a Councillor withdraws their support then the candidate is no longer eligible unless another Councillor is willing to propose or second them as necessary.
 - 5.6.6** After each full round of voting the votes will be tallied. In the event that a candidate has obtained an absolute majority of votes (50% of those present and eligible to vote, +1), that candidate will be declared elected.
 - 5.6.7** If no candidate receives an absolute majority of votes, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated and a new round of voting takes place. This process continues until there is only one candidate left.
 - 5.6.8** If the field has been reduced to one candidate without anyone being elected then a final vote will be held on the one remaining candidate. The candidate must still be proposed and seconded, and must receive an absolute majority of the vote in order to be elected.
 - 5.6.9** If no candidate is successfully elected then the vacancy is declared unfilled.

6 After the meeting

- 6.1** All candidates are informed of the results of the vote in writing.
 - 6.1.1** Candidates who did not attend the meeting are informed as to whether any vacancies remain unfilled and asked whether they would like their applications to be retained and considered for future vacancies.
 - 6.1.2** Candidates who were unsuccessful are thanked for their applications and asked if they would like to be directly notified if any future vacancy arises.
 - 6.1.3** Candidates who were elected are provided with all necessary documents relating to their election, including but not limited to their Declaration of Acceptance of Office; their Register of Interests; their Consent to Electronic Summons and any dispensations or other documents needed. Candidates will be informed of the need to complete and return these documents within 28 days or their election will be invalidated.
- 6.2** Successful candidates will serve until the next quadrennial elections for the Parish Council.
- 6.3** Any vacancies that remain unfilled will be readvertised within two weeks of the meeting to ensure there is sufficient time for applications to be received prior to the next Full Council meeting.
- 6.4** If, after 6 months, a vacancy still remains unfilled the Council will advertise the vacancy every 6 months rather than after every meeting.