

Worstead Parish Council Co-option Procedures

Introduction

Co-option is a recruitment process to fill Parish Councillor vacancies. Parish Councils are able to co-opt new Councillors after an election when all vacancies have not been filled, when a Councillor resigns, is disqualified or dies. The following procedures outlines the process for the co-option of Councillors in both election and non-election years.

Procedures in a non-election year

1. On receipt of a resignation/notification of death of a Councillor, the Clerk will contact North Norfolk District Council to request a formal notice of vacancy. The Clerk will display the notice on the Council's noticeboard, website and in other prominent places in the village. If after the statutory 14-day period a by-election has not been claimed by at least ten electors then the Parish Council is free to co-opt. The Clerk will advertise locally to encourage people to apply.

2. The Clerk will ask prospective candidates to:

1. complete an application form providing personal details and information to support their application (including eligibility) for consideration by the Councillors
2. attend a Parish Council meeting at which their application is to be considered.

3. Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Parish Councillor, qualification criteria and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Parish Council are not obliged to co-opt any member if it is felt that candidates are not suitable. The importance of regular attendance will be stressed, as well as the need to advise of absence from a meeting.

4. The Clerk will circulate to all Councillors the application form and any additional information provided by the candidates. If necessary, an extra meeting of the Parish Council will be held to specifically consider the co-options.

5. At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves to Councillors, 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 public session and there will be no private discussions between Councillors prior to a vote being taken. After candidates have finished giving their submissions, Councillors will vote using a voting slip with all candidate names listed and select the same number of candidates as there are vacancies.

6. In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an overall majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy 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 overall majority.

7. If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are advertised again.

Procedures in an election year

8. If following the close of nominations at an ordinary election of the Parish Council there is a quorum of elected members but some outstanding vacancies, the Clerk will advertise for interested candidates (as already detailed). The procedures outlined from number 2 will then be followed.