

Hargrave Parish Council

Co-option Policy for casual vacancies

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council must give public notice of a casual vacancy as soon as possible in accordance with section 232 of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.2 The Clerk shall duly publish 'a notice of vacancy', as provided by North Northamptonshire Council, giving 14 working days within which a by-election may be called.

1.3 Following expiry of the 14 days' notice, North Northamptonshire Council will advise the Council if a by-election is to be held or if the vacancy is to be filled by co-option.

1.4 The Council may choose not to attempt to fill the vacancies, in which case the unitary council has powers to hold a further election or to take other appropriate action to fill the vacancies.

1.5 To ensure good decision making, meet its responsibilities under equality legislation and to provide a fair and transparent process, the following procedure has been adopted by Hargrave Parish Council.

1.6 Vacancies created by insufficient candidates in an ordinary election will be dealt with by the 'policy for insufficient candidates in an ordinary election.'

2.0 The co-option process

2.1 Where no by-election is called, the Council must meet and fill the vacancy within a reasonable period of time following expiry of the initial 14 day period. The only exception is where a by-election is not called and the vacancy occurs within 6 months of when the Councillor would retire, then the post may be left vacant.

2.2 The Clerk will advertise the vacancy for 4 weeks on the Council notice board and website, applying for eligible candidates to come forward.

2.3 Applicants for co-option will be asked to:

- submit information about themselves, by way of completing an application form and submitting their statement. Such statement should outline the characteristics, attributes and qualities which they would bring to Parish Council affairs and highlight the reasons why the candidate feels he/she should be co-opted onto the Parish Council;
- confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor by certifying a copy of the eligibility criteria on the application form.

2.4 Clerk will publish a list of candidates for co-option along with the agenda for the meeting where the co-option will be deliberated.

2.5 Copies of the applicant's statement and application form will be circulated to all Councillors, prior to the relevant full Council meeting where the co-option is to be considered. Documents may be tabled in respect of a late application. All such documents shall be treated as Private and Confidential.

2.6 Candidates will be given the opportunity to address the Council for no longer than two minutes in support of their application but are not obliged to do so.

2.7 No questions may be asked of candidates except in relation to what has been presented by candidates.

2.8 Candidates will be offered the opportunity to ask questions of the Parish Council.

2.9 A resolution to move to voting will then be made.

2.10 Voting will be in accordance with statutory requirements. A successful candidate must receive an **absolute majority**, i.e. receive more than 50% of the votes cast.

2.11 If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives an absolute majority over the rest of the candidates, the candidate with the least votes will fail and the remaining candidates voted on again. This process shall be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

2.12 Voting will be by secret ballot on pre-prepared ballot papers.

2.13 The counting of votes shall be undertaken by the Clerk together with one other person, who shall not be candidate for co-option.

2.14 In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman will have a second casting vote.

2.15 After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman or other person presiding will declare the successful candidate duly elected.

| Version | Date adopted | Minute ref | Reviewed |
|---------|--------------|------------|----------|
| 1 | 9 May 2022 | 22.23 | |
| | | | |