

# CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL



## CO-OPTION POLICY

Policy Number 16		
Issue No.	Date completed	Details of amendments
1		Draft Policy

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This policy sets out the procedures for the co-option of Councillors in both non-election (casual vacancies) and election years.

## **2.0 POLICY IN NON-ELECTION YEARS**

- 2.1 In the event of the need for co-option in a non-election year, the following process will be undertaken:
- 2.1.1 The Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing notices at various locations in the Parish, on the Council's website, on social media and by placing an advertisement in a local paper. The closing date for nominations will be fourteen days from the date of the press advertisement.
  - 2.1.2 The Clerk will require prospective candidates to:
    - Provide written confirmation that they are both qualified and not disqualified from holding office. (See Appendix B below)
    - attend a meeting of the Full Council, and
    - provide a one page 'manifesto' to assist Councillors in reaching a decision.
  - 2.1.3 Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Councillor and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate if it is felt that candidates are not suitable.
  - 2.1.4 If necessary an extra meeting of the Council will be held to specifically consider the co-options.
  - 2.1.5 At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves to Councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a Member of the Council. Council will then discuss the candidates and make a decision regarding the co-option. This process will be carried out in public session.
  - 2.1.6 In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain 50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting.
  - 2.1.7 If an insufficient number of candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.
  - 2.1.8 The expectation is that the co-opted Councillor would fill the positions vacated by the previous Member of the Council.
  - 2.1.9 The Clerk will provide all Councillors and the press with copies of the new membership to committees, working groups and representatives to outside bodies as soon as practicable.

### **3.0 POLICY IN ELECTION YEARS**

3.1 In the event of the need for co-option in an election year, the following process will be undertaken:

3.1.1 If following the close of nominations at an Ordinary Election, there is a quorum of Elected Councillors, but some outstanding vacancies, the Clerk will advertise for interested candidates by placing notices at various locations in the Parish, on the Council's website on social media and by placing an advertisement in a local paper.

3.1.2 The Clerk will require prospective candidates to:

- complete a form providing confirmation that they are both qualified and not disqualified from holding office. (See Appendix B below)
- attend a meeting of the Full Council and
- provide a one page 'manifesto' to assist Councillors in reaching a decision.

3.1.3 Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Councillor and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Council is not obliged to co-opt any candidate, if it is felt that candidates are not suitable.

3.1.4 The closing date for nominations will be noon on the Monday after the election takes place and co-options will be considered at the first meeting of the Full Council following the election, (usually the Annual Statutory Meeting), and will be the first business to be considered after the Election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

3.1.5 At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves to Councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a Member of the 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. Voting will take place in the normal way as soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions.

3.1.6 In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain 50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting.

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

## APPENDIX A



# CUCKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## NOTICE OF CASUAL VACANCY

NOTICE Is hereby given that due to the resignation of Councillor **XXXXXX** a vacancy has occurred among the Members of the Parish Council. Any person willing to fill this vacancy should apply to the Clerk in writing on or before the **XXXXXX**.

APPLICANTS should provide a short presentation, (no more than one side of A4 paper) on why they would like to be a Parish Councillor and what they feel they can offer to the community.

THE applicant's name must appear on the current register of the Voters List or the applicant should during the whole of the twelve months preceding the relevant date have resided in or within three miles of the parish or the applicant's only place of work during the whole of the twelve months preceding the relevant date is in the parish.

THE applicant must not be debarred from standing as a Councillor.

PUBLIC elections cannot be held until the year **XXXXXX** but for the interim period the present sitting Councillors may co-opt to fill the vacancy.

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**XXXXXX 201X**

## **APPENDIX B**

### **CRITERIA FOR STANDING AS A COUNCILLOR**

The usual phrasing is that applicants should be qualified and not disqualified from standing for election.

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELECTION**

Anyone can stand as a candidate provided they meet the qualification requirements. Candidates should be:

- Aged over 18
- A British, Commonwealth citizen or citizen of an EU country
- A registered elector

and have been

- Resident for 12 months prior to the day of election/co-option either in the parish or within three miles of the boundary or:
  - Occupied land or premises for 12 months as owner or tenant either in the parish or within three miles of the boundary
  - Had a principal place of work either in the parish or within three miles of the boundary.

### **DISQUALIFICATIONS**

You cannot become a Councillor if:

- You have been declared bankrupt within the last five years if you have not repaid your debts.
- You have been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to not less than three months imprisonment (whether suspended or not) without the option of a fine within the last five years.
- You have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices.