



Co-option Policy & Procedure

The co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken the following procedure will be followed by Aldingbourne Parish Council:

1) On receipt, of written confirmation, from the Electoral Services Office, that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of Co-option, The Clerk will:

a) Advertise the vacancy on all the Parish Councils notice boards, website, social media accounts and request an article in the local newspaper.

2) Applicants for co-option will be asked to: a) Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form. (A copy of the application form is attached).

b) Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules, (A copy of the Eligibility Form is attached).

3) Copies of the applicant's application form will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk prior to the meeting of the full Council, when the Co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.

4) If the number of applicants for a single vacancy exceeds 3, the applications will be heard informally at a specially convened meeting to allow candidates and members sufficient time to receive the application and to facilitate time for questions and answers. No resolution, voting or decisions will be made at this meeting. This

meeting is to allow for an appropriate period of information sharing between members and applicants.

5) If there are less than 3 applicants they will be invited to the next full Parish Council meeting where Co-option is to be discussed and invited to speak giving information about themselves and why they would like to be a Councillor. Members will be allowed to ask questions of the applicants.

6) At the next available full council meeting, the press, public and applicants will be asked to leave the Council meeting, in order for the applications to be considered. There are no set rules regarding how a Council co-opts a member. Members may choose who they like but the applicant must be qualified to have been a candidate. After voting has taken place the press, public and applicants will be asked to re-join the meeting and the result declared.

7) Voting will be in accordance with statutory requirements, in that, a successful applicant must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two applicants for one vacancy, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained. Therefore, if there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded. Voting will continue with the lowest polling applicant being excluded until the number of applicants matches the number of vacancies. Voting will be by ballot and if any member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of members who voted, so as to show whether they voted for, against or abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

8) Only Councillors present at the full council meeting may propose, second or vote upon a person to fill the vacancy.

9) If there is more than one vacancy, a councillor may nominate one person per seat. Each councillor will have only one vote per seat i.e. two vacancies will enable two votes.

10)The first candidate to receive an absolute majority of those present and voting will be duly elected.

11)After the vote has been concluded, the Chairman declares that the successful candidate has been co-opted to the Council.

12)The same procedure will be carried out in the event that there are simultaneous vacancies in the 3 wards that make up the Parish of Aldingbourne.

13)Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business they must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office in the presence of the Clerk.

14)The Clerk will advise Democratic Services at Arun District Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the council.

15)The Clerk is responsible for providing each new councillor with an induction and new councillors pack. It will be taken that all new councillors have read and understood the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders adopted by Council.

16)All new councillors must, within 28 days of appointment to office, register their interest with the Monitoring Officer. Forms will be supplied by the Clerk and new Councillors must return the completed forms back to the Clerk within this time scale.

17)The Council is not obliged to provide feedback on the application process to unsuccessful candidates.

Adopted on:.....

At:.....

Review date:.....