



Broadbridge Heath Parish Council

New member co-option policy and procedure

Adopted: May 2022

Reviewed: Oct 2023/No Change

Next Review: May 2025

Minute ref: 235/23

Policy

Parish Councils are permitted to exercise the power to co-opt a person on to the Council to fill a casual vacancy when the requirements to hold an election have not been met (i.e. the vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and less than 10 registered electors have requested an election by a deadline date specified by the District Returning Officer). Although seeking 'expressions of interest' is not a legal requirement, NALC recommends that Councils always give public notice of vacancies because this makes the process of co-option open and transparent and should attract more potential candidates.

The decision-making process below is framed to take place in open sessions of full council meetings, as advised by NALC. Although this creates the possibility of awkward situations where negative decisions are made, such occasional difficulties are the price of open decision-making.

Procedure

Whenever the need for co-option arises, the Clerk will first notify HDC Electoral Services of the vacancy and seek authority to advertise for a co-opted member. Subject to there being no applications to hold an election, the vacancy will be advertised by seeking expressions of interest from anyone eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor, by a specified date.

Having initially contacted the Clerk, applicants will be invited to attend and observe the next Parish Council meeting. The applicant will be offered an informal conversation with the Chair or Clerk as an opportunity to inform themselves about Broadbridge Heath Parish Council's work and current priorities, and not part of the selection process. Enquirers will also be sent an initial information pack including the NALC guidance note on Being a Parish Councillor and the member's Code of Conduct.

In advance of the Full Council meeting at which co-option is to be considered

Applicants will be requested to provide a written personal statement which:

a) confirms in writing that the applicant meets legal eligibility requirements, that s/he understands and commits to maintaining the standards set out in the members' Code of Conduct, and that their telephone and/or e-mail contacts will become public information if they become a Councillor;

b) sets out the qualities and skills that the applicant can bring to the role, which should address the criteria of the general person specification and, where possible, current skills priorities.

Applicants will be informed when Broadbridge Heath Parish Council is due to consider their application and invited to attend and say a few words about why they would like to join the Parish Council.

Procedure for co-option item at the Full Council meeting:

i. Clerk to confirm that each candidate is qualified to become a Councillor and is not disqualified from being a Councillor as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 s79 and s80;

ii. Having compared personal statements to the desirable criteria, members will vote, either on the appointability of a single candidate, or where there is more than one candidate, for their favoured candidate. An absolute majority vote is required for any candidate to be appointed (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39). In case of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote.

iii. After the meeting the Clerk is authorised to approach and offer co-option to candidate(s) agreed. If a candidate drops out at this stage, the item will come back to the next full PC meeting, including review of any unsuccessful applications.

iv. The Clerk to notify HDC Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' on the Parish Council website. New Councillors will also be sent full induction materials and upcoming training opportunities and are expected to attend the general introductory training for new PC members, preferably within the first six months of appointment.