

Heath & Holmewood Parish Council Procedure for co-option for a new Councillor

The Co-Option Policy is to be adopted by the Parish Council at its Meeting to be held on 12th June 2019

This procedure is based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 – Good practice for selection of candidates for co-option to local Councils.

The co-option of a parish councillor occurs in two instances:

1. When an ordinary vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
2. When a casual vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

Although seeking 'expressions of interest' is not a legal requirement, the National Association of Local Councils (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.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, Heath & Holmewood Parish Council will:

Consider advertising the vacancy to seek and encourage 'expressions of interest' by a specified date from anyone in the Parish who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor.

All potential candidates will be requested to put their request for consideration in writing with the following additional information: -

- I. Reason for wishing to be Councillor
- II. Which village of the Parish would you consider your representation stands for?
- III. Previous Community/Council work
- IV. Other skills they can bring to the Council (please note it is a condition of a Councillor that a means of contact by telephone and/or email will be public information)

Following the deadline date: -

- 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. Chairman to offer opportunity for debate on the order of priority to offer co-option
- III. Vote on the acceptability of each candidate for co-option, utilising the 'person specification' criteria set out below and any personal statements requested from and provided by candidates.
- IV. At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given ten minutes maximum to introduce themselves to the parish councillors (members), give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. If the process is to be carried out in the public session, where the Parish Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Parish Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.
- V. During the members debate regarding co-option, consideration will be given to the areas which candidates represent and fair distribution of representation will be a priority.
- VI. An absolute majority vote is required for each candidate from all members present and entitled to vote (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39) (The applicant with the least number of votes casted will be deleted and the vote taken again and again etc. until the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies)
- VII. Vote to select the order in which acceptable candidates (decided by the vote at II. above) should be approached to offer co-option on this occasion.
- VIII. The Clerk to approach and offer co-option to candidate(s) after the meeting in the order of priority determined by the vote at VII. above, if the first choice does not accept the post then the second is to be approached and so on until the ranking list is exhausted.
- IX. Assuming that the co-option position is filled, formally ratify the appointment at the next Full Council meeting.

- X. The Clerk to notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' on the Parish Council website.
- XI. If no one accepts the vacant post(s), the whole process is to be repeated when new individuals expressing interest are identified or until the next election.

Copies of the eligible candidates' applications will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Clerk at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full Parish Council or when the co-option will be considered.

All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all parish councillors as strictly private and confidential.

Co-opted Councillor Person Specification

Competency	Essential	Desirable
Personal Attributes	<p>Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community</p> <p>Forward thinking</p>	<p>Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council</p> <p>Living within the Parish</p>
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	<p>Ability to listen constructively</p> <p>A good team player</p> <p>Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects</p> <p>Solid interest in local matters</p> <p>Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.</p> <p>Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see other views and accept majority decisions.</p> <p>Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly.</p> <p>Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff.</p> <p>Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish Councils, principal authority, charities).</p> <p>Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training.</p>	<p>Experience of working or being a member of a Parish Council</p> <p>Experience of working with voluntary and or local community / interest groups</p> <p>Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to Parish Councils</p>

Circumstances	Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends.	
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Draft Policy