



## Co-option Policy

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 Highworth Town 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 Town Clerk will:
  - a) Advertise the vacancy for 3 weeks on the council notice boards and website.
  - b) Advise the Council that the Co-option Policy has been instigated, by sending a memorandum to all Councillors.
2. Applicants for Co-option will be asked to:
  - a) Provide information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form, and submitted their Curriculum Vitae.
  - b) Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor with the statutory rules.
3. Copies of the applicant's Curriculum Vitae and application form will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at last five calendar days prior to the meeting of the 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. There are no rules regarding Co-option of members. The Council may choose who they like but the person must be qualified to be a candidate. Candidates will be asked to briefly meet with the Council along with other candidates and speak for 3 minutes at a Council Meeting.
5. The press and public will be asked to leave the Council Meeting, in order for the applications to be considered. After due consideration the Chairman will reconvene the Meeting and it will be reopened to the public and press and voting takes place.
6. The Chairman will request the Councillors present to nominate any of the candidates. Candidates will require a proposer and seconder to progress to the voting stage. If there is only one vacancy, a Councillor may only nominate or second one candidate.
7. Councillors shall vote by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. All Councillors present must either vote<sup>1</sup>or withdraw. If any member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted on or against. In the case of an equality of votes for two different people.

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<sup>1</sup> For or Against the resolution but cannot abstain

8. If there is more than one vacancy, a Council may nominate one person per seat. Each Councillor will have only one vote per seat i.e., two vacancies will enable votes for two different people.
9. Voting will be according to the statutory requirements, in that, a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting<sup>2</sup>. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps<sup>3</sup> 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.
10. After the vote has been concluded the Chairman declares that the successful candidate is duly elected. The successful candidate is then declared Co-opted to the Council and summoned to attend the next Council Meeting.
11. The Clerk will advise the Monitoring Officer of the names of anyone Co-opted to the Council.
12. The Clerk is responsible for providing each new Councillor with an induction, a new Councillors pack and should ensure that all new Councillors have read and understood the Code of Conduct and other policies, rules and protocols adopted by the Council.
13. Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business s/he must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and deliver it to the Clerk. The individual will be summonsed to attend the next Full Council Meeting.
14. All new Councillors must, within 28 days of appointment to office, register their interests with the District Council Monitoring Officer.

This Policy was adopted on 15th March 2022 at Full Council

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<sup>2</sup> LGA 72 Sch 12. S.39 (1)

<sup>3</sup> If there are two candidates with tied lowest vote the Chairman will cast his second vote for one of them, thereby eliminating the other. If there are 3 or more candidates with the lowest vote, one or more candidates will be invited to withdraw, failing which the lowest scoring candidate will be determined by the drawing of lots.