

Whissonsett Parish Council

Co-option Policy

Policy Approved: 14th March 2022

Review Schedule: Three yearly

1. Background

The process for co-option is only partially prescribed in law but there is best practice advice and guidelines around certain aspects of the process. Items marked in bold are prescribed in law.

2. Scope and purpose

This policy aims to explain the procedure regarding co-option. The information contained in it is to be used by members of the council and members of the public. The aim of the policy is also to show that the council endeavours to treat all applicants fairly and alike, and to ensure that the process is also seen as fair, open and transparent. This policy details the processes to be followed regarding co-option.

3. When a vacancy arises

A co-option vacancy arises when a member of the Council leaves, and the position is formally advertised for 14 days. At the end of this 14-day period if insufficient names have submitted a request to the District / Borough Council to call for an election (this is 10 names) then the Council can fill the vacancy by co-option. (Refer Local Government Act 1972 s86 and 87(2)(b)).

4. Applications

We aim to encourage applications from anyone in the parish who is eligible to stand. Councillors or parishioners can approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option. Co-option vacancies will be advertised on the website (www.whissonsettpc.info) and on the noticeboard. The advertisement for the co-option will include:

- a) Method by which applications can be made, this will be in writing to the Clerk.
- b) Contact point for potential candidates to obtain more information – the Clerk.
- c) Closing date for applications, with a minimum of six weeks and then left open for applications.

When applications are received, the Clerk will confirm eligibility. Any candidate found to be offering inducements will be disqualified.

5. Attendance following an application

All eligible candidates shall be invited by letter or email, to attend the next council meeting following the application deadline. They will be asked to confirm their attendance at the meeting.

In the event of candidates being unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged. All members receive copies of applications ahead of the meeting. Applications are to be treated as confidential. A candidate, on confirming that they will attend the meeting will be sent a copy of the agenda and agenda papers.

6. Commitment

The council is keen that potential candidates understand the commitment which is required from councillors. Anyone interested in standing will be encouraged to look at the website for more information on the role of being a councillor. Candidates will also be told that they are expected to attend an Induction training event which will be held externally.

7. The process of co-option at the Council meeting

There is an early agenda item at which each candidate will be asked to make a brief verbal presentation on why they would like to be a councillor and the skills they can offer the council (3 minutes maximum per candidate). All of this, including the voting for the candidate will be in public. Candidates may be asked questions by members. In the event of a candidate being unable to attend, their application will still be considered by members. In the event of a candidate being related to a councillor, then the councillor would be expected to declare an interest and request a dispensation to speak and vote.

8. Voting

Only councillors present at the meeting may vote. There will be one vote per vacancy to be filled (Chairman may have a casting vote). **The successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting** (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12). If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and not one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, 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. The process is to be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.

9. Starting as a councillor

The successful candidate(s) are asked to start as a councillor immediately after completing their declarations of acceptance of office. **The fact that the new member has not received a summons does not make their attendance as a councillor illegal** (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12, para 10(3)). If an absent candidate is successful, members must agree to them signing the declaration of acceptance of office before or at the very start of the next meeting. New councillors will also be made aware of the fact that Interests Forms will need to be completed within 28 days of co-option.

10. Filling a Co-option vacancy

The council must fill co-option vacancies as soon as practicably possible.

Example Advert:

Are you interested in joining Whissonsett Parish Council?

We have a vacancy on the Parish Council for a parish councillor.

Becoming a parish councillor is a rewarding and valued form of public service.

Councillors contribute to the work of the Parish Council by:

- *Having a say about the things they care about*
- *Putting forward ideas for better services*
- *Responding to the needs and views of parishioners*
- *Seeking the best outcome to local issues*
- *Getting involved in decision making*
- *Helping to make Whissonsett a better place to live*

We normally meet on alternate months, commencing in January. Meetings are held in the Village Hall and commence at 7.30 and last up to two hours. Councillors are expected to attend meetings on a regular basis.

If you are interested, we would love to hear from you. Contact the Clerk to find out more – whissonsettparishcouncil@gmail.com or 01362 667756

Closing Date for applications:

For co-option at meeting being held on:

Co-option Application Form

This form is to be used for anyone seeking co-option onto Whissonsett Parish Council.

Qualifications to be a Councillor

A person is qualified to be a councillor if they are a British, Commonwealth or European Union citizen and on the day of co-option are 18 or over.

In addition, the person must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. on the day of co-option and thereafter they continue to be on the electoral register for the parish, or
2. during the whole of the twelve months before that day they have owned or tenanted land or premises in the parish, or
3. during the whole of the twelve months before that day their principal or only place of work has been in the parish, or
4. during the whole of the twelve months before that day they have resided in the parish or within three miles of it.

Certain people are disqualified from standing, and these include paid officers (including the clerks) of the council, bankrupts and those subject to recent sentences of imprisonment. If you think that you may be disqualified please check the following information on the Electoral Commissions website: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/141784/Part-1-Can-you-stand-for-election-LGEW.pdf or contact the clerk.

For councillors to be able to consider your suitability for co-option, please confirm your eligibility and explain why you would like to be a councillor, maximum 100 words, on the page overleaf.

**APPLICATION TO BE CO-OPTED AS A COUNCILLOR TO
WHISSONSETT PARISH COUNCIL**

To be completed (**delete as applicable*):

I confirm that I am over 18 and a British/Commonwealth/European Union citizen.

Please indicate which of the four qualification criteria (set out on previous page) you meet, include all that apply:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |*

I would like to be a parish councillor
--

Contact Details:

Name	
Address	
Email address	
Home telephone number	
Mobile telephone number	

Please send the completed form to the parish clerk:

Whissonsett Parish Council, Bay Tree Cottage, School Road, Brisley, NR20 5LH or

whissonsettparishcouncil@gmail.com