



COLEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION POLICY – ADOPTED 22nd May 2024

1. Applicability of the Co-option Process

- 1.1 This policy covers the co-option policy to fill a casual vacancy on Colehill Parish Council.
- 1.2 A casual vacancy is when a seat on the council becomes vacant, which may be for a number of reasons including resignation, disqualification or death of a councillor, or when a councillor fails to attend meetings.
- 1.3 Where a casual vacancy arises the Clerk will advertise the vacancy on the Council notice boards and web site.
- 1.4 If within 14 days at least 10 electors have provided written notice to request an election to fill the vacancy then a by-election will be held.
- 1.5 If no by-election is held then the Council must fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable, unless the vacancy falls within six months of the next Council election.

2. The Co-option process

- 2.1 Candidates must complete and return to the Clerk a co-option application form, which confirms their consent to nomination and includes a declaration that they meet the criteria for eligibility and are not disqualified from standing.
- 2.2 Candidates will be invited to attend a meeting of the Council for interview, and to provide an opportunity for them to ask any questions.
- 2.3 The decision must be based solely on the candidate's suitability for the appointment. It would be unlawful to come to a conclusion based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the position. No question should be asked, or consideration given, to the candidate's: Age, Race, Sex and sexual orientation, Disabilities, Creed, Marital status and family, Political affiliation.
- 2.4 After the candidate's own introduction, the same questions should be put to all candidates. To enable this to occur, questioning will be restricted to three Council members, the Chairman and two others, on a rolling programme. 'Follow-up' questions to the candidate's application (written and oral) should be concerned with clarification only, so that there is no suggestion of applicants being led to 'improve' on their original statements, particularly if they include information on the subjects listed above.
- 2.5 The meeting will be open to the public to attend, to ensure transparency in decision making.

- 2.6 Where the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies, then providing they meet the eligibility criteria and are not disqualified they shall be appointed to the Council following a resolution to appoint them.
- 2.7 Otherwise, where there are more candidates than vacancies, voting will be by show of hands, in accordance with Standing Orders.
- 2.8 Where there is a single vacancy, then an absolute majority vote is required from all members present and entitled to vote. The candidate with the least number of votes will be removed and the vote re-taken until a majority is achieved. A tie will be settled by a casting vote by the Chair of the meeting.
- 2.9 Where there are multiple vacancies then the voting will repeat as described above for each vacancy in turn.
- 2.10 The successful candidate(s) will then be declared co-opted and will be summoned to join the next meeting of the Council, once they've signed their declaration of acceptance of office. From that point they are a councillor and no different to any other member.
- 2.11 Within 28 days of becoming a councillor, a person must complete the online register of members' interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer at Dorset Council.

Version History

Date	Summary of Changes
9/3/21	Policy rewritten based on NALC Legal Topic Note LTN8, key changes: - Clarifying that candidates must be appointed, if there are fewer candidates than vacancies. - Specifying that the council selection meeting shall be open to the public. - Detailing the voting method, by show of hands on a majority basis for each vacancy in turn.)
5/4/22	Incorporating the online Register of Members' interests.
11/4/23	Reviewed, no changes
22/5/24	Reviewed, no changes

This Policy will be reviewed annually, next review due May 2025.