

WHITEPARISH PARISH COUNCIL

CO-OPTION PROCEDURE

Introduction

Vacant seats following the election process are classed as “ordinary vacancies”. It is the responsibility of the Parish Council to fill ordinary vacancies within 35 days of the election (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays).

“Casual’ vacancies” are those which occur when a councillor resigns, dies or become disqualified during the four year term. The process of giving ten electors the opportunity to call a by-election is only relevant for casual vacancies. If no request for an election is received by Wiltshire Council by the date on the Notice of Vacancy, the Democratic Services Department will advise the Parish Council that it may co-opt to the vacancy.

Co-option is the process by which the Parish Council selects a new Councillor and it is done as an agenda item within a Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council entirely manages the process of co-option and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure set out below:

1. The Parish Council posts a notice on the Parish Council Noticeboard, website and village newsletter inviting interested candidates to contact the Parish Clerk, who will ask them, often by a specified date, to write to the Council explaining why they would like to be a councillor and listing the principal skills and experience that they could bring to the role.
2. Upon receipt, the Parish Clerk will check (as far as reasonably possible) that the candidate is eligible in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, section 79-80.
3. Following receipt of eligible applications, the next Parish Council meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of parish councillor and to co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy'.
4. If there is more than one candidate for a vacancy the letters received are circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting at which a Parish Councillor is to be co-opted.
5. At the Parish Council meeting the candidates are invited to say something about themselves. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes for this. Councillors will also have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidates.

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 to be filled, a Councillor may only nominate or second one candidate.
7. The Chairman places the names of those nominated into alphabetical order and proceeds to the vote. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
8. Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the Chair of the meeting.
9. Voting will be in accordance with Standing Orders by a show of hands and will continue until one candidate has received an absolute majority of those Councillors present. At this stage, the successful candidate will be declared co-opted and, after signing the Declaration of Acceptance of Office form, will be invited to join the meeting.
10. Within 28 days of being elected, the new councillor will also need to complete a Register of Interests form.
11. The person co-opted will be a councillor in their own right. A co-opted councillor is no different to any other member as co-option is a legitimate form of election as part of the election process.

Reviewed 29th July 2025