



Weasenham Parish Council Co-option Policy

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Latest Review date: 26th November 2024, edited 13th January 2026

Next review: January 2028

Introduction

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

Parish Councils are permitted to exercise the power to co-opt a person onto the Council to fill a casual vacancy when the requirements to hold an election have not been met. 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.

Policy and procedure for co-opting a new Councillor

Whenever the need for co-option arises, Weasenham Parish Council will consider advertising the vacancy to seek and encourage 'expressions of interest' by a specified date from anyone in the parish of Weasenham who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor. Any reasonable form of advertising as deemed by the Parish Council is acceptable (e.g. PC Website, noticeboards, village Facebook page, newsletters, posters, etc). Where potential candidates are unknown to the Council, they will be requested to complete an application form. These forms will be shared with all Councillors for their consideration and, where felt beneficial, an informal meeting will be arranged between the applicant(s) and Councillors. The Clerk will confirm that applicants are not disqualified from becoming a Councillor by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, sections 79 and 80. Where a candidate is known to the Council, and there is sufficient knowledge and information about the candidate that indicates their suitability for co-option, the process can be expedited and co-option arranged with minimal delay.

Co-Option Procedure when there are more applicants than vacancies:

At the next Full Council meeting:

- i. Clerk to confirm that each candidate is qualified to become a Councillor.
- ii. Chairman to offer opportunity for debate on the suitability of the candidates, based on their application, the person specification criteria, set out below, and any personal statements requested from and provided by candidates. The order of priority to offer co-option should also be discussed.
- iii. Vote on the acceptability of each candidate for co-option. 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 will be deleted and the vote taken again. This process will be repeated until the number of candidates equals

the number of vacancies.

Where deemed appropriate, this process can take place in closed session.

- iv. The Clerk to approach and offer co-option to candidate(s) after the meeting.
- v. All appointments will be ratified at the next Full Council meeting.

Option Procedure when there are fewer applicants than vacancies:

At the next Full Council meeting (notwithstanding the caveat above):

- i. Clerk to confirm that each candidate is qualified to become a Councillor.
- ii. Chairman to offer opportunity for debate on the suitability of the candidates, based on their application, the person specification criteria, set out below, and any personal statements requested from and provided by candidates.
- iii. Vote on the acceptability of each candidate for co-option. An absolute majority vote is required for each candidate from all members present and entitled to vote (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 39).
- iv. If accepted, the candidate(s) will be called forward to complete the required documentation and take their position on the Council.

Following all co-option processes, the Clerk will notify Democratic Services of the new Councillor appointment(s), initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' on the Council website.

CO-OPTED COUNCILLOR PERSON SPECIFICATION

RESIDENCY & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicant is 18+ years old
- Applicant is a British Citizen (or eligible Commonwealth citizen).
- Applicant lives and/or works within the Parish (for the preceding 12 month or more) or lives within 3 miles of the Parish Boundary and therefore an elector of the Parish.

COMPETENCY ESSENTIAL / DESIRABLE

Personal Attributes

- Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local Parish.
- Forward thinking.
- Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council.

Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability

- Ability to listen constructively.
- A good team player.
- Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects
- Solid interest in local matters for the betterment of the Parish/Community.
- Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their Parish.
- Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others' views and accept majority decisions.
- Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly.
- Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and the Clerk.
- Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other Parish Councils, principal authority, charities).
- Ability and willingness to undertake Councillor induction training and other relevant training.
- Experience of working with voluntary and or local interest groups in a positive manner.
- Ability to express a 'Positive vision of the Community' that clearly articulates a desire to see improvements for the benefit of the Parish and its Parishioners.
- Willingness to actively support and promote the Parish Council's acceptance of the 'Civility and Respect' pledge.

Circumstances

Ability and willingness to regularly attend meetings of the Council. Please note that the majority of Council meetings are held in the evening and, unfortunately, under present legislation, the Parish Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of Councillors' childcare or care of dependants.