

Co-option Procedure

Adopted by West Wrating Parish Council at the Parish Council Meeting held on 8th January 2024.

The election of local parish councillors take place every four years in conjunction with principal authority elections¹. At these times the Parish Council will canvas parishioners via website, posters, Challenge magazine, etc. to encourage them to stand as candidates. This is to encourage representation on the Parish Council by parishioners from all walks of life, with varied and complementing experiences, interests and skills.

West Wrating Parish council has seven councillors. This document describes how positions are filled when vacancies arise between the principal authority elections.

There are two types of vacancy:

Ordinary

This occurs as a result of insufficient nominations for the seats available at the time of election. Any such vacancy/vacancies should be advertised within 35 days of the election.

Casual

A casual vacancy occurs when a Councillor resigns, dies or becomes disqualified inside the four year cycle of ordinary elections.

A by-election for the vacancy can only be held if:

- There is more than one candidate for the vacancy

AND

- Ten electors from within the parish area submit requests to the Proper Officer of the district council within 14 working days of the publication of the notice of vacancy. The requests may be submitted together, separately, or a combination of the two.

Subject to the six month rule², if the required ten requests for a by-election to fill a casual vacancy on a parish council have not been received in the 14 working days after the notice of vacancy has been published, the parish council must fill the vacancy by co-option³. This

¹ <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-council-elections-england>

²

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-returning-officers-administering-local-government-elections-england/casual-vacancies-and-elections/six-month-rule>

³

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-returning-officers-administering-local-government-elections-england/casual-vacancies-and-elections/requests-hold-a-election>

co-option should take place as soon as is practicable after the end of the 14 working day period.

The Co-option Process for Ordinary and Casual Vacancies

There are no statutory arrangements in place to co-opt to fill a vacancy and therefore West Wrating Parish Council (WWPC) has elected to adopt the following process in order to be fully transparent.

The nomination qualifications required of an applicant for either an ordinary or casual vacancy are the same in accordance with S79 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Where an ordinary vacancy/vacancies occur the following will apply:

1. The vacancy/vacancies notice will be advertised as follows:
 - On the Parish Council notice board.
 - In the Challenge newsletter.
 - On the Parish Council website and other relevant social media.
2. The notice will have a closing date of 35 days for receiving applications.
3. If no applications are received the notice will be advertised again with a new 35 days closing date.
4. This will continue until such time as an application/applications are received.
5. When an application/applications are received by the closing date the following will apply:
 - a. Each applicant will be provided with a copy of this procedure.
 - b. Each applicant may be invited to provide a "CV" to include the reasons for interest in being a Parish Councillor and what attributes they have to offer for the benefit of the community.
 - c. Each applicant will be asked to complete a Legal Declaration of Qualification to hold Public Office as a Local Councillor.
6. If items b (if requested) and c are not completed by an applicant then they will not be considered for the vacancy.
7. The Parish Clerk will circulate details of the application/applications to all the other Councillors prior to the next Parish Council meeting.
8. There will be a separate item on the Parish Council meeting Agenda to deal with the application/applications.
9. Each applicant will be invited to attend the Parish Council meeting to introduce themselves to the Parish Council and to talk with the Councillors present.

10. If an applicant does not present themselves to the Parish Council meeting and they cannot provide a valid reason for not attending then they will not be considered for the vacancy/vacancies at that time.
11. After meeting the applicant(s) the Parish Council will discuss in private the merits of the applicants. This will either be done a) in following weeks, or b) immediately by adjourning to a private room where members of the press and public are excluded under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.
12. In case 11a), at the next Parish Council meeting a vote will take place in accordance with the adopted voting protocol (Standing Order 8 applies). No proxy votes are allowed. In case 11b) the Parish Council meeting will re-convene as an open meeting and a vote will take place immediately.
13. The Chairman will declare the result.
14. The result will be recorded in the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting.
15. The Parish Clerk will notify all Parish Council Councillors of the voting count and the result of the selection process as soon as possible afterwards.
16. No feedback will be given to any applicant in respect of the Parish Council's private discussions unless agreed by the Parish Council.
17. The successful applicant/applicants will be offered a Parish Council email address that they will be asked to use for Parish Council email communication.
18. The successful applicant/applicants will be provided with access to the following documents:
 - a. The Parish Council's [Standing Orders](#).
 - b. The Parish Council's [Financial Regulations](#).
 - c. The Parish Council's [Code of Conduct](#).
 - d. An electronic copy of [The Good Councillors Guide](#).
19. The successful applicant/applicants will:
 - a. Sign a Declaration of Acceptance of office form.
 - b. Complete a Declaration of Interest form and submit this to the Parish Clerk who will submit to the Monitoring Office within 28 days.
20. If for any reason an applicant/applicants are not selected then the vacancy/vacancies will be re-advertised in accordance with this procedure.

This draft policy is based on the that from Dunnington Parish Council (<https://www.dunningtonparishcouncil.gov.uk/publications/co-option-procedure>) and on material from the [Electoral Commission](#).

Note from LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992: PARISH PRECEPTS for information only.

2. PARISH & TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS

2.1 There are no scheduled town or parish council elections taking place in May 2024. The next scheduled town and parish council elections will take place alongside elections to the district council in May 2026.

2.2 If a town or parish has a by-election caused by a casual vacancy, 100% of the costs of that election will be recharged to the Town/Parish Council.

2.3 The rough cost of a parish by-election will escalate in line with the size of the electorate. The cost will usually be between £1800 (for small parishes), up to £7000/£8000 for larger parishes. There are many variables and it is difficult to provide accurate estimates.

2.4 Please email the Elections Team (elections@scambs.gov.uk) if you have any questions regarding 2024 Electoral Arrangements.