



Redgrave Parish Council

PROCEDURE FOR CO-OPTION OF A NEW COUNCILLOR

1. Introduction

This co-option procedure allows Redgrave Parish Council to fill vacancies between elections when a seat becomes available. It is designed to ensure a fair and transparent procedure for filling vacancies to provide the council with the necessary number of councillors to function effectively. Based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 – “Good practice for selection of candidates for co-option to local Councils”, it outlines the steps to be taken for the co-option of new councillors,

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 (i.e. the vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and less than 10 registered electors have requested an election by a deadline date specified by the District Returning Officer).

Although seeking ‘expressions of interest’ is not a legal requirement, 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.

2. Procedure

The following procedure is to be adopted for the co-option of new councillors to fill vacancies on Redgrave Parish Council

2.1 Vacancy Declaration.

2.1.1. Identify Vacancy: A vacancy occurs when a councillor resigns, passes away, or if there is an insufficient number of candidates at an election.

2.2.1 Notice of Vacancy: The Parish Clerk should notify the local electoral authority and display the Notice of Vacancy in accordance with the legal requirements, typically for 14 working days. If no requests for an election are received during this time, the council can proceed with the co-option process.

2.2. Preparation for Co-option.

2.2.1. Set a Co-option Meeting Date: The Parish Council should decide when to hold the co-option meeting, ensuring it is in accordance with the council’s meeting schedule and providing enough time for potential candidates to submit their applications.

2.2.2. Publicise the Vacancy: Advertise the vacancy to the community, to seek and encourage 'expressions of interest' by a specified date from anyone in the Parish who is eligible to stand as a Parish Councillor. This can include:

- Notices on the Parish Council's website, noticeboards, and social media.
- A press release or a notice in local newspapers.
- Email communications to local interest groups or residents.

The notice of vacancy should provide clear information on how individuals can apply for co-option.

2.2.3. Application Process: Interested candidates should submit their 'expressions of interest' in writing, to include

- Reason(s) for wishing to be a councillor;
- Previous Community/Council work;
- Other skills they can bring to the Council.

Note it is a condition of a Councillor that a means of contact by telephone and/or e-mail will be public information.

2.3. Eligibility Check

Upon receipt of applications the Parish Clerk should confirm that all applicants meet the legal requirements for being a councillor, which include:

- Being at least 18 years old.
- Being a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland.
- Being a local resident or having their principal place of work within the Parish Council's area.
- Not being disqualified due to reasons such as bankruptcy, criminal convictions, or being a civil servant.

2.4. Shortlisting Candidates.

2.4.1. Review Applications: The Parish Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, should review the applications to ensure that each applicant meets the eligibility criteria.

2.4.2. Select Candidates for Interview (optional): If necessary, the Council can choose to interview candidates to assess their suitability for the role. This may include questions about their motivations, experience, and vision for the Parish.

2.5. Co-option Meeting.

2.5.1. Notification of Co-option Meeting: The Parish Council should include the co-option on the agenda of the next council meeting, giving proper notice to all members.

2.5.2. Candidate Presentation: During the meeting, candidates may (if applicable if Parish Council deems it appropriate) be invited to speak for a set period (e.g., 3-5 minutes) to explain why they wish to be co-opted and to answer any questions from councillors.

2.5.3. Councillor Discussion: Following the presentations, the councillors may ask any further questions to clarify points and assess the suitability of each candidate.

2.5.4. Voting: After discussion, councillors will vote on the co-option of candidates. Voting can be done by a show of hands or a ballot, depending on the Parish Council's practices. The candidate must receive a majority vote from the councillors present to be co-opted.

2.6. Decision and Announcement.

2.6.1. Co-option Result: The result of the vote will be announced immediately after the voting process. If a candidate is successfully co-opted, they will be invited to take their seat on the council.

2.6.2. Formal Acceptance: The successful candidate should sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and complete any required paperwork to formally take up their role as a councillor.

2.6.3. Public Announcement: Following the meeting, the council should publicly announce the new councillor via appropriate communication channels (e.g., the Parish Council website, social media, or a local newspaper).

2.6.4. Minutes: The co-option should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, specifying the name of the new councillor and the result of the vote.

2.6.5. Update Council Records: The Parish Clerk should update the council's records, including the list of councillors and contact details.

2.7. Induction and Training.

2.7.1. Provide Induction: New councillors should be given a thorough induction, which may include:

- An introduction to the Parish Council's policies, procedures, and responsibilities.
- A briefing on financial matters and budgets.

2.7.2. Offer Training: New councillors should be encouraged to attend any available training or workshops to develop their skills, particularly those related to local government, planning, and community engagement.