

# BILBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

## Policy and Procedure for Co-Opting a New Councillor

### 1. Policy Statement

This policy outlines the procedure for Bilbrook Parish Council to fill a vacant councillor position by co-option when an election is not required. The process is designed to be open, fair, and transparent, with all applicants treated equally. Co-opted councillors are full members of the Parish Council.

### 2. Procedure for a Vacancy

- **Advertising:** The Clerk will advertise the vacancy on the parish noticeboard and website, inviting expressions of interest from eligible individuals by a specific deadline.
- **Applications:** Applicants must submit a written or emailed expression of interest to the Clerk, stating their reasons for applying and what skills or experience they can bring to the role. Candidates are encouraged to attend a Parish Council meeting before applying.
- **Eligibility Check:** The Clerk will confirm each candidate's eligibility and ensure they are not disqualified from being a councillor, as set out in Local Government Act 1972 s79 and s80 (see Appendix A).
- **Information Sharing:** Copies of the candidates' expressions of interest will be provided to all councillors, in line with data protection legislation.

### 3. Selection and Voting

- **Meeting Invitation:** Candidates will be invited to the next Parish Council meeting to introduce themselves and answer questions from councillors. The Council may choose to conduct interviews beforehand if the agenda is very full.
- **Declaration of Interest:** Any councillor with a prejudicial connection to a candidate must declare an interest, withdraw from the meeting, and will not be allowed to vote.
- **Deliberation and Voting:** Candidates will be asked to leave the room while councillors present consider the candidates' expressions of interest and answers against the person specification (see Appendix B). Councillors will then vote to select a candidate.
- **Voting Method:** Each councillor has one vote per vacancy. A show of hands will be taken unless a secret ballot is requested by at least two councillors. In the case of multiple nominees without an absolute majority, the nominee with the fewest votes will be eliminated, and a new vote will be taken. This continues until one person has an absolute majority.
- **Casting Vote:** The Clerk will count the votes. In the event of a tie, the Chair of the meeting will have a casting vote.
- **Council's Right:** The Council reserves the right to leave a vacancy unfilled if no candidate is deemed suitable.

### 4. Post-Selection Process

- **Announcement:** The Chair will announce the result to the council. The successful candidate will be informed outside the meeting by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. If the candidate declines, the offer will pass to the next highest-ranking candidate. The new councillor will then be invited to stay for the remainder of the meeting.
- **Paperwork:** The successful candidate should,
  - at the co-option meeting, sign the **Acceptance of Office form** and complete the **Councillor Information form**.
  - as soon as possible thereafter, complete the **Pecuniary Interest form** and **Code of Conduct**
- **Formalisation:** The Clerk will notify South Staffordshire Council Electoral Services of the appointment and email the Pecuniary Interest form to the Monitoring Officer.

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- **Website:** The new Councillor's details will be added to Bilbrook Parish Council's Website <https://bilbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk/your-parish-council/council-members/>
- **Induction/Training:** The Clerk will arrange an induction and training with the SPCA (Staffordshire Parish Council Association) for the new councillor.
- **Failed Co-option:** If no one accepts the post, the entire process will be repeated.

**5. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required.

**Record of Changes**

<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Description of Revision</b>
Sept 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condensed and changed to reflect the current practice.</li> </ul>
Sept 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 .Added the Councillor Information Form. Allowed more time for Pecuniary Interest form &amp; Acceptance of the code of conduct to be completed.</li> <li>• Added “.14. The Clerk will arrange a date for the Councillor to come into the office for an induction”</li> </ul>
Sept 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6. Added the grass skirts method for when there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates exceeds the number of spaces.</li> <li>• 8 New paragraph.</li> <li>• 11. New paragraph</li> </ul>
Sept 2022	No changes

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**Appendix A: Eligibility & Disqualification**

- A person is qualified to be a councillor if they are at least 18 years old, a qualifying Commonwealth or EU citizen, and for the past 12 months, have either resided in the parish, owned or rented property there, had their main place of work there, or lived within three miles of the parish.
- A person is disqualified if they hold a paid office with the Parish Council, are subject to bankruptcy restrictions, have been sentenced to three months or more in prison within the last five years, or have been found guilty of corrupt electoral practices.

**Appendix B: Co-opted Councillor Person Specification**

This person specification outlines the desired attributes, skills, and commitment for a prospective councillor.

- **Attributes:** Possesses a sound knowledge of local affairs and the community, is forward-thinking, and can bring new skills or expertise to the Council.
- **Skills:** A team player with good interpersonal and communication skills. Must be willing to represent the Council, contribute opinions, and accept majority decisions.
- **Experience:** Desirable experience includes working with a local authority, community groups, or having a basic knowledge of local government legal issues.
- **Commitment:** Must be able and willing to attend meetings and events, including those held in the evening and at weekends.
- **Contact Information:** As a condition of being a councillor, a public means of contact (telephone and email) is required, and a Declaration of Interests Form must be completed and published.