



BRANSTON PARISH COUNCIL POLICIES

TITLE: Co-option policy

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Branston Parish Council.

The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council, and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

The co-option of a parish councillor occurs in two instances:

1. When an ordinary vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four years,
2. When a casual vacancy has arisen on a Parish Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

2 Ordinary vacancy

An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on a Parish Council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidates who were nominated are automatically elected to the Parish Council and any remaining vacancies are known as "ordinary vacancies". Provided there are enough parish councillors to constitute a quorum, the Parish Council is usually able to co-opt a volunteer to fill the vacancies.

3 Casual vacancy

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time,
- A councillor resigns,
- A councillor dies,
- A councillor becomes disqualified,
- A councillor fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of a council, committee or sub-committee or to attend as a representative of the council at a meeting of an outside body.

A Parish Council has to notify the Borough Council of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors for the parish the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten (10) electors write to the Borough Council stating that an election is requested.

If more than one (1) candidate is then nominated, a by-election takes place but if only one (1) candidate is put forward they are duly elected without a ballot.

If ten (10) residents do not request a ballot within fourteen (14) days of the vacancy notice being posted, as advised by the Electoral Services Office, the Parish Council is able to co-opt.

4 Confirmation of Co-Option

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option.

The Clerk will:



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- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks or such other period as the Parish Council may agree on the Parish Council notice boards and website

This procedure will also apply in the case of an ordinary vacancy where the Electoral Services Office has confirmed that there were insufficient nominations to fill all the seats but there are sufficient parish councillors elected to constitute a quorum.

5 Eligibility of Candidates

The Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- He/she is 18 or over,
- He/she is a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union;

and at least one of the following apply:

- He/she is an elector for the Parish and continues to be an elector,
- Or has resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish,
- Or has had his/her principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months,
- Or has lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.

There are certain disqualifications for being a parish councillor, of which the main are (see s80 of the Local Government Act 1972):

- Holding a paid office or employment under the Parish Council,
- Bankruptcy,
- Having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the preceding five years,
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

6 Applications

Candidates will be requested to:

- Submit information about themselves.
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of parish councillor within the statutory rules.
- Attend a parish council meeting prior to them being invited for co-option consideration

Following receipt of applications, and the applicant having attended a parish council meeting, the next suitable Full 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'.

Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the next available meeting.

Copies of the eligible candidate application will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Clerk at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the Full Council, when the co-option will be considered.



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All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all parish councillors as strictly private and confidential.

7 Co-Option

At the Full Council meeting, a candidate will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves to the parish councillors (members), give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council, what they can offer to the parish council. The process will be carried out in the public session and there will be no private discussions between members prior to a vote being taken.

Each candidate will be interviewed separately.

In order for a candidate to be co-opted to the Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting).

The Clerk will notify East Staffordshire Borough Council of the co-option of the new parish councillor.

The co-opted parish councillor will complete a Register of Interests form and Declaration of Acceptance of Office before the next meeting of the council.

Annex 1: Co-opted Councillor Person Specification

Personal attributes

The parish council will be looking for candidates who have a sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs of the local community of Branston.

Forward thinker

Experience, skills, knowledge

Ability to listen constructively

A good team player

Ability to run with a variety of projects

Solid interest in local issues

Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others views and accept majority decisions.

Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and maintain good working relationships with members and staff.

Circumstances

Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council.



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Annex 2: Casual Vacancy

The parish council aims to encourage applications from anyone in the parish who is eligible to stand.

Councillors or parishioners can approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option.

As a minimum, co-option vacancies will be advertised on the notice boards.

1. Method by which applications can be made, this will be in writing to the Clerk
2. The closing date for applications, if applicable
3. Contact point for potential candidates to obtain more information – Chair/Vice Chair
4. Advice that further information is available on request
5. A questionnaire to complete which includes asking the candidate why they would like to be a councillor; name; address and other contact details. When applications are received, the Clerk will confirm eligibility.
6. Request that candidates must have attended at least one parish council meeting prior to submitting their co-operation request

Any candidate found to be offering inducements will be disqualified.

All candidates will be sent a copy of the agenda.

Appendix 3; Questionnaire

Voting to Co-opt a candidate

Votes will be taken and the candidate will be informed in writing the following day.