

STENSON FIELDS PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Stenson Fields Parish Council. The Co-option procedure is entirely managed by Stenson Fields Parish Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

The Co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by-election) has been called. 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; or
- A councillor fails for six (6) months to attend meetings of a council committee or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the Council a meeting of an outside body.

CO-OPTION

1. On receipt, of written confirmation, from the Electoral Services Office at the District Council, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of Co-option, the Parish Clerk will:
 - a) Advertise the vacancy for 4 weeks on the Council notice boards and website;
 - b) Advise the council that the Co-option Policy has been instigated, by sending a memorandum to all Councillors.
2. Applicants for co-option will be asked to:
 - a) Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form, and submitting their Curriculum Vitae;
 - b) Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules.
3. Copies of the applicant's Curriculum Vitae and application form will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least seven days prior to the meeting of the Council, when the Co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.
4. At the next available Council meeting, the press and public will be asked to leave the Council meeting, in order for the applications to be considered Protocol Nine Exclusion of access by the public to meetings. There are no rules regarding co-option of members. The Council may choose who they like but the person must be qualified to have been a candidate. After due consideration the chairman will reconvene the meeting and it will be reopened to the public and press and voting takes place.
5. Voting will be according to the statutory requirements, in that, a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and

STENSON FIELDS PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again; this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained. Therefore if there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded. If two candidates poll the same number of votes a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies. Councillors shall vote by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. If any member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of members who voted on any question so as to show whether they voted for, against, or abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

6. Only Councillors present at the full council meeting may nominate, second or vote upon a person to fill the vacancy. At this meeting, members will be informed of the names of anyone wishing to be considered as a councillor.
7. If there is more than one vacancy, a councillor may nominate one person per seat. Each councillor will have only one vote per seat i.e. two vacancies will enable two votes.
8. If no single candidate receives a majority on the first vote then the person with the lowest number of votes will be eliminated and voting will take place on the remainder. This process will continue until one person receives an absolute majority.
9. The first candidate to receive an absolute majority of those present and voting will be duly elected.
10. After the vote has been concluded, this business is concluded when the Chairman declares that the successful candidate is duly elected. The successful candidate is then declared co-opted to the Council and summoned to attend the next council meeting.
11. The Clerk will advise the Monitoring Officer of the District Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.
12. The Parish Clerk is responsible for providing each new councillor with an induction, a new councillors pack and should ensure that all new councillors have read and understood the Code of Conduct and the Constitution adopted by the Council.
13. Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business s/he must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and deliver it to the Clerk. The individual will be summonsed to attend the next full council meeting where s/he will sign the Declaration.

Minute Reference: - XXX/18