

# LITTLE BEALINGS PARISH COUNCIL

## CO-OPTION POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the procedure to be followed by Little Bealings Parish Council (“the Council”) to when co-opting new Councillors. The policy has two aims:

- To comply with legislative requirements for co-option
- To ensure that an open, fair and consistent procedure is followed by the Council

### CO-OPTION

The need to co-opt a new Councillor arises when:

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

### DEFINITIONS

#### **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. Candidates who were nominated are automatically elected to the Parish Council and any remaining vacancies are known as “ordinary vacancies”. Provided there are enough Councillors to constitute a quorum, a Parish Council is usually able to co-opt to fill the vacancies.

#### **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; or
- 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 a meeting of an outside body.

A casual vacancy must be notified to East Suffolk Council and a ‘Notice of Vacancy’ displayed. If a request for an election is not received in writing by East Suffolk Council from 10 electors within 14 days of the date of displaying the notice, the Parish Council can proceed to fill the vacancy by co-option.

## **PROCEDURE**

Upon receipt of written confirmation from East Suffolk Council that an ordinary vacancy exists (but the Council has sufficient Councillors to be quorate), or that no request for an election has been received in response to the display of a Notice of Vacancy in respect of a casual vacancy, the Council will:

- Advise East Suffolk Council that it will seek to fill the vacancy by co-option
- Invite applications for the vacancy by advertising the vacancy:
  - for four weeks on the Parish Council notice boards and website
  - once via the local e-news service
  - by placing a notice in an edition of the Fynn Lark News, or other relevant local publication

## **APPLICATIONS**

Applicants are required to:

- Attend at least one Parish Council meeting as observers, if a meeting is to be held within the co-option timeframe
- Consider 'The Good Councillor's Guide' published by The National Association of Local Councils, or equivalent publication
- Submit an application form (attached as Appendix A)
- Establish their eligibility for the position of parish councillor. It is the applicant's responsibility to establish their eligibility to be a parish councillor.

Applications will be considered by the Council at the next suitable Parish Council meeting and the Council will resolve who to co-opt at that meeting, unless there are grounds for deferral eg, due to the illness of an applicant.

Applicants will be invited to attend the meeting.

Copies of applications will be circulated to Councillors at least three clear days prior to the meeting at which applications will be considered. All applications will be treated as strictly private and confidential and will not be published.

## **AT THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Applicants will be allocated up to five minutes to speak at the meeting, introducing themselves and giving such information as they wish on their background, knowledge, experience and reasons for wanting to become a Parish Councillor. Speaking will take place in public session.

The co-option process will be carried out in public session and there will be no private discussions between Councillors prior to a vote being taken.

The Parish Council will proceed to a vote with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance (as defined in the Standing Orders) and a vote by a show of hands (LGA 1972 Sch. 12. Para 13).

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). If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority.

If there is an insufficient number of applicants to fill the vacancies, the vacancies will be readvertised and the process repeated.

**APPENDIX A**

**CONFIDENTIAL TO THE COUNCIL**

**LITTLE BEALINGS PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM**

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	
<b>Email Address:</b>	

Please detail any experience or knowledge you may have that is relevant to your application (if necessary continue onto a separate sheet). Please include details of your IT competency, including use of Microsoft Office, Zoom and other applications.

**Use of Personal Information**

The Parish Council will use the information provided on this form to assess your application to be a parish councillor. Applications will retained if you become a Councillor, for the duration of your period as a Councillor. Unsuccessful applications will be destroyed after the vacancies had been filled.

**Declaration & Consent**

I..... hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Little Bealings Parish Councillor and I am not disqualified under s80 of the Local Government Act 1972 from being a parish councillor and that the information given on this form is true and correct.

I have read the section entitled "Use of Personal Information" and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this form for the purpose of considering my application to be a Parish Councillor.

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....