



PARBOLD PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR CO-OPTION POLICY

1. Applicability of the Co-option Process

1.1 This policy covers the co-option policy to fill a casual vacancy on Parbold Parish Council.

1.2 A casual vacancy is when a seat on the council becomes vacant, which may be for a number of reasons including resignation, disqualification or death of a councillor, or when a councillor fails to attend meetings for 6 consecutive months (with no apologies accepted).

1.3 Where a casual vacancy arises the Clerk will notify West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) and advertise the vacancy on the Council notice boards and website. This must include the method by which the application can be made, the closing date for the application and a contact point for more information.

1.4 If within 14 days at least 10 electors have provided written notice to request an election to fill the vacancy then a by-election will be held.

1.5 If no by-election is held then the Council must fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable, unless the vacancy falls within six months of the next Council election.

2. The Co-option process

2.1 Candidates must complete and return to the Clerk a co-option application form, which confirms their consent to nomination and includes a declaration that they meet the criteria for eligibility and are not disqualified from standing.

2.2 The Parish Council can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that the applicant:

- is an elector for the parish; or
- has resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the parish; or
- has his/her principal place of work in the parish; or
- has lived within three miles radius (direct) of the parish

Expressions of interest rather than proper applications will not be considered.

There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main are (Local Government Act 1972)

- Holding a paid office for the Parish Council under the local authority
- 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 five years preceding the election; and
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practice

Eligibility of the candidate(s) will be confirmed by the Clerk.

2.3 Candidates will be invited to attend the next suitable meeting of the Council for interview, and to provide an opportunity for them to ask any questions.

2.4 The decision must be based solely on the candidate's suitability for the appointment. It would be unlawful to come to a conclusion based on anything other than the ability of the candidate to undertake the duties of the position. No question should be asked, or consideration given, to the candidate's: Age, Race, Sex and sexual orientation, Disabilities, Creed, Marital status and family, Political affiliation.

2.5 After the candidate's own introduction, the same questions should be put to all candidates. To enable this to occur, questioning will be restricted to three Council members, the Chairman and two others, on a rolling programme. 'Follow-up' questions to the candidate's application (written and oral) should be concerned with clarification only, so that there is no suggestion of applicants

being led to 'improve' on their original statements, particularly if they include information on the subjects listed above.

2.6 The meeting will be open to the public to attend, to ensure transparency in decision making.

2.7 Where the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies, then providing they meet the eligibility criteria and are not disqualified they shall be appointed to the Council following a resolution to appoint them.

2.8 Otherwise, where there are more candidates than vacancies, voting will be by show of hands or paper ballot, in accordance with Standing Orders.

2.9 Where there is a single vacancy, then an absolute majority vote is required from all members present and entitled to vote. The candidate with the least number of votes will be removed and the vote re-taken until a majority is achieved. A tie will be settled by a casting vote by the Chair of the meeting.

2.10 Where there are multiple vacancies then the voting will repeat as described above for each vacancy in turn.

2.11 If insufficient candidates come forward, or no candidate is elected, the process should continue whereby the vacancies are advertised again. The Council does not have to accept any candidate even if there is only one Candidate for one position.

2.12 Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

2.13 The successful candidate(s) will then be declared co-opted and will be invited to join the next meeting of the Council, once they've signed their declaration of acceptance of office. From that point they are a councillor and no different to any other member.

2.14 Within 28 days of becoming a councillor, a person must complete, sign and return to the Clerk details of any "disclosable pecuniary interests" so that they may be registered with the Monitoring Officer at West Lancashire Borough Council, together with any other interests that may be required by our Code of Conduct.