

HELMINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY

Prepared by: Parish Clerk
Adopted by Resolution of : Helmingham Parish Council **on** 15th May 2026
Reviewed & Re-Adopted:
Date of Next Review: May 2027

This policy sets out in detail the circumstances which permit and legislation relating to the co- option of persons to fill the vacancies within the parish council and is based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 which recommends good practice to be taken in respect of a co-option process.

Notification

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council.

  In this instance the Parish Clerk would be notified of vacancies by MSDC Electoral Services. Efforts must be made to fill the vacancies by co- option.

- When a Councillor vacates their post.

  The Parish Council is not obliged to co-opt to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply. However, it is not desirable that electors be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload; to provide a broad cross- section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times.

Application Process to be Followed

Upon receipt of written notification from the Electoral Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option the Parish Clerk will announce the vacancy/vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification by means of displaying a Notice on the Council Notice boards and website.

Interested parties will be emailed and are recommended to read the publication, "The Good Councillor Guide" which explains more about the role and the responsibilities of councillors. Applications will be considered at the next appropriate full Council meeting following the application closure date

Candidates will be sent the agenda of the meeting at which they are to be considered for appointment together with a copy of the Councils adopted Code of Conduct.

At the meeting where the co-option is to be considered each candidate will be given the opportunity to introduce themselves to the Councillors and give any information to support their application.

Once the applicants have completed their presentations the Council will then proceed to a vote on the acceptability of each applicant using the person specification, and any personal statements provided.

Each candidate will be proposed and seconded by the Councillors in attendance. Councillors shall vote by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. At the request of a Councillor, the

voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each Councillor present and voting gave his vote for, against or abstained.

For an applicant to be elected onto the Parish Council it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast. If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with the overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process and further rounds of voting will take place until a candidate has an overall majority. In the case of an equality of votes the Chairman of the meeting has a second and casting vote.

After the vote has been concluded the Chairman of the meeting will declare the successful candidate duly co-opted and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office take their seat immediately. Within 28 days of co-option the successful applicant is also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Parish Clerk

If insufficient or unsuitable candidates come forward for co-option the process should continue and the vacancy advertised.

Person Specification

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) legal briefing suggests a personal specification that identifies attributes that a Parish Council should be looking for when co-opting a councillor. In addition, the Parish Council welcomes people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community.

The Parish Council is looking for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following:

• Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.

• Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.

• Good interpersonal skills. Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability

• Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly.

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

• Ability and willingness to work with the council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities).

• Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.

• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends.

• Flexible and committed to the Council.

• Enthusiastic.