HELLESDON PARISH COUNCIL
The Council Office, Diamond Jubilee Lodge, Wood View Road, Hellesdon, Norwich, NR6 5QB
Tel: 01603 301751 www.hellesdon-pc.gov.uk email: contact@hellesdon-pc.gov.uk

Hellesdon Parish Council
Co Option Policy

1. Background
The process for co-option is only partially prescribed in law but there is best practice advice and guidelines around certain aspects of the process.

2. Scope and Purpose
This policy aims to explain the procedure regarding co-option. The information contained in it is to be used by members of the council and members of the public. The aim of the policy is also to show that the council endeavours to treat all applicants fairly and alike, and to ensure that the process is also seen as fair, open and transparent. This policy details the processes to be followed regarding co-option.

3. How a vacancy arises
A co-option vacancy arises when a member of the Council resigns, passes away, or becomes disqualified and the position is formally advertised for 14 days. At the end of this 14-day period, if insufficient names have submitted a request to Broadland Council to call for an election then the Council can fill the vacancy by co-option.
After Broadland Council has advised that a co-option can proceed, the Clerk will advise the Council that this policy has been initiated.

3.1 Applications
Hellesdon 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. Co-option vacancies will be advertised on the website, noticeboards and social media releases. The advertisement for the co-option will include:

a) A link to an application form on council website [example attached]. Alternatively application forms can be sent post or email.
b) Applications should be in writing to the Clerk
c) The contact point to obtain more information is the Clerk
d) The closing date for applications

3.2 Eligibility
When applications are received, eligibility will need to be confirmed.
1. In order to be eligible for co-option to Hellesdon Parish Council, the application must be aged 18 years or over, be a British subject (which includes a commonwealth citizen), a citizen of the Irish Republic, or a citizen of the European Union, and be able to meet one of the following qualifications:
1) Be a registered as a local government elector in Hellesdon; or

2) A person who

a) has, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of co-option occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in Hellesdon, or

b) has, during the same period, resided in Hellesdon or within three miles thereof, or

c) has, during the same period, had their principal or only place of work in Hellesdon.

2. A person is disqualified from being co opted as parish councillor if they:
a) Hold any paid office or employment of the local council; or
b) Is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors*; or
c) Has within five years before the day of co option been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
d) Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

*The disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:
a) If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged;
b) If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part;
c) If the person is discharged without such a certificate

Any candidate found to be offering inducements will be disqualified.

4. Commitment

The council is keen that potential candidates understand the commitment which is required from councillors. Anyone interested in standing will be encouraged to look at the website for more information about the council. The application form for completion will also include a description of the role. Councillors are strongly recommended to attend an Induction at the council offices where they can be shown the areas of Parish Council responsibility, and to attend new councillor training.

5. The process of Co-option at the Council meeting

All eligible candidates shall be invited to attend the next council meeting. They will be asked to confirm their attendance at the meeting. In the event of candidates being unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged. All members receive copies of applications ahead of the meeting. Applications are to be treated as confidential. A candidate, on confirming that they will attend the meeting will be sent a copy of the agenda.

There will be an early agenda item at which each candidate will be invited to make a brief verbal presentation on why they would like to be a councillor and the skills they can offer the council (3 minutes maximum per candidate). All of this, including the voting for the candidate will be in public. Candidates may be asked questions by members. In the event of a candidate being unable to attend, their application will still be considered by members.

6. Voting

Only councillors present at the meeting may vote. The successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and not 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. The process is to be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.
All voting must be by a show of hands and the Chairman will be entitled to a casting vote.

7. Starting as a councillor
The successful candidate will be asked to start as a councillor immediately after completing their declaration of acceptance of office. New councillors will also be made aware of the fact that Interests Forms will need to be completed within 28 days of co-option.

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Role of a Parish Councillor

A parish councillor plays a key role in their local community, fostering and representing the views and interests of the electorate. They are collectively responsible, with their fellow councillors, for making council policy and are accountable to the electorate in their parish..

Councillors will often be asked by electors to pursue matters on their behalf, and they should work with council staff to bring these matters to the attention of the council as they do not have executive authority as an individual councillor. The key purpose of a councillor is to represent the views of their electorate.

It therefore follows that there are no circumstances where an individual councillor can issue an instruction to their clerk or a contractor. Likewise, a councillor must never act on behalf of the council in the organisation of any function or service and must ensure they make it clear, when speaking to individuals, that they speak as a councillor and not on behalf of the council as a whole.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To attend parish council meetings.
- To prepare for meetings and be properly informed by reading agenda packs about the issues to be discussed.
- To take part in meetings and form sound judgements based on what is best for the community and then abide by majority decisions.
- To maintain proper standards of behaviour as an elected representative and abide by the Code of Conduct adopted by the council, maintaining high ethical standards at all times.
- To participate effectively as a member of any committee or working party to which the councillor is appointed.
- To contribute constructively to the democratic process and to actively encourage the parish to participate generally in the government of the area and provide access to information where appropriate.
- To uphold the parish or town council's standing orders and ethical standards (ensuring that the impartiality of council staff is not compromised).
- To take an active part in the parish or town council's arrangements to build community capacity and promote measures that contribute to the parish's vision and strategy.
- To participate constructively in the government of the parish council.
- To participate fully in the formation and scrutiny of the parish council's policies, budgets, strategies, and service delivery.
- To influence and shape the long-term development policy of the council.

- To ensure, with other councillors, that the parish council is properly managed, always remembering that the clerk is accountable to the council as a whole and not to individual councillors.
- To keep up to date with significant developments affecting the parish council at local, regional and national levels.
- To promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the parish, taking account of the strategic effects on other communities and the parish council as a whole.
- To work to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers.
- To effectively represent the interests of the ward for which the councillor is elected.
- To represent the whole electorate; listen, and then represent the views of the whole community when discussing council business and working with outside bodies.
- To represent the parish council on outside bodies to which the councillor is appointed.

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Application Form for Co Option to Hellesdon Parish Council

Name	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	
Please tell us, in less than 100 words, why you would like to become a parish councillor and what skills you could bring to the Parish Council	
Thank you for your interest in our role. If you have any queries about the role, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk on 01603 301751 or clerk@hellesdon-pc.gov.uk	