

EASTON ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

Co-Option Process for Ordinary and Casual Vacancies

(For Casual Vacancies this process will apply when a by-election has been advertised but not claimed)

There are no statutory arrangements in place to co-opt to fill a vacancy and therefore Easton Royal Parish Council will apply the NALC advice on “How Do I Co-opt a Councillor”.

Details regarding the available position will be circulated by the Clerk ahead of the next Parish Council meeting giving a deadline for applications. (See below)

The applicants will be asked to give details of why they would like to become a councillor and what skills they feel they can bring to the council.

The Parish Council may resolve to exclude members of the press and public under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to enable it to discuss the merits or otherwise of the applicants. The Parish Council meeting will then re-convene as an open meeting and a vote will take place in accordance to Item 8 of the Standing Orders.

VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS

Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chair of the meeting.

The Chair will declare the result which is then recorded in the Minutes of the PC meeting.

The successful applicant/applicants will be provided with the following :

- A copy of the Parish Council Standing Orders
- A copy of the Parish Council Financial Regulations
- A copy of the Parish Council Code of Conduct
- A copy of the Good Councillor’s Guide

The successful applicant/applicants will comply with the following :

- To sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office form
- To complete a Declaration of Interest Form and submit this to the Parish Clerk who will submit to the Monitoring Office at Wiltshire CC within 28 days.
- To use a Parish Council email address.

The new councillor will be asked to attend an online workshop “Councillor Fundamentals”

If for any reason an applicant/applicants is not selected then the vacancy/vacancies will be re-advertised in accordance with this procedure.

HOW DO I CO-OPT A COUNCILLOR?

Local (parish and town) councils can only be as connected and helpful as the people elected to run them, so we need councillors capable, enthusiastic and engaged to reflect their communities. Making co-options is an opportunity for councils or their committees to address shortfalls and imbalances in their membership. Steps should be taken to identify the nature of these gaps and to conduct a recruitment process that specifically targets them.

There are two ways that co-options can occur:

- There have been insufficient candidates to fill all of the available seats at an election.
- A casual vacancy has arisen between elections, and there is no demand to hold a by-election.

What is the process for co-opting a councillor?

The council should specify how to apply for the role (in writing, any deadlines, with or without CVs) and stipulate how co-options will be made (via interview, public or private). The council should check that all applicants are eligible for the post. The electoral returning officer and the county association can advise on the detail of eligibility and disqualification.

The council should interview all eligible candidates before deciding who to co-opt. Where there are more candidates than vacancies, a vote should take place. If there are more than two candidates for one available place, the result must be by a clear majority, meaning that the chosen candidate must receive more votes than the total of votes; for the other candidates.

How do I co-opt a good councillor?

Here are four simple steps to co-opting a good councillor:

1. The council should identify any shortfalls and imbalances in their membership. The council should take steps to identify these gaps and recruit specifically for them.
2. Councils should co-opt to benefit the diversity of the council to welcome all backgrounds, experiences and abilities. Use a job description and person specification to target specific skills or groups.

3. The council should highlight the necessary skills to be a good councillor, for example, good communication skills, problem solving, analytical thinking and being a team player. However, the most important attribute is to care about the community and be willing to take an active role.
4. Advertise for the role across all media platforms: social media, community newsletters, websites and notice boards. While also creating an advert for community hotspots like the local post office or coffee shop. Additionally, look to work with community groups to advertise the vacant role. The council should also send a copy of the notice to the Monitoring Officer.

Once you have found a new councillor

- The new councillor must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and, they can then join the council as a fully-fledged member.
- Within 28 days, the new councillor must complete a Declaration of Interests form which must be sent to the council's monitoring officer.
- The council should also make its Register of Interests available via its website either by publishing the register directly or by providing a link to the monitoring officer's website register.

What training and support is there?

Councillors should receive training and support via their county association. County associations are representative bodies for local councils in their area. As part of their induction, councils should ensure that their new councillors receive:

- Schedule of council meeting dates
- Standing orders
- Financial regulations
- Code of conduct
- Contact details (for the clerk and other councillors)
- Budget and assets register for the council.
- Minutes from recent council meetings
- Documents relevant to your council (e.g. Parish Plan).

For more information, please get in touch with policycomms@nalc.gov.uk .

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