

## **HORSFORD PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Co-option is a recruitment process to fill parish councillor vacancies. Parish Councils are able to co-opt new councillors after an election when all vacancies have not been filled, or when a councillor resigns, becomes disqualified or dies. The following procedures outlines the process for the co-option of councillors in both election and non-election years.

### **Procedures in a non-election year**

1. On receipt of a resignation or notification of death of a councillor, the Clerk will contact Broadland District Council to request a formal notice of vacancy. The Clerk will display the notice on the Parish Council's noticeboards, website and social media pages. If after the statutory 14-day period a by-election has not been claimed by at least ten electors then the Parish Council is free to co-opt. The Clerk will advertise locally to encourage people to apply.
2. The Clerk will ask prospective candidates to:
  - Complete an application form providing personal details, information to support their application for consideration by members of the Council together with a written summary covering their reasons for wishing to become a councillor.
  - Attend a Parish Council meeting at which their application is to be considered.
3. Prospective candidates will be provided with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Parish Councillor, qualification criteria and the nature of their duties and will also be advised that the Parish Council is not obliged to co-opt any member if it is felt that candidates are not suitable. The importance of regular attendance will be stressed, as well as the need to advise of absence from a meeting. It is also expected that new Councillors will attend appropriate training as recommended by the Chairman of the Parish Council.
4. The Clerk will circulate to all members of the Council, with the appropriate Agenda pack, the application form and any additional information provided by the candidates. If necessary an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council will be called to specifically consider the co-options.
4. At the co-option meeting, candidates will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. The process will be carried out in public session and there will be no private discussions between councillors prior to a vote being taken. After candidates have finished giving their submissions, members will vote by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, the voting shall be recorded so as to show whether each member present and voting gave his vote for or against that item.
6. In order for a candidate to be elected onto the Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an overall 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 then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an overall majority.
7. If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are advertised again.

8. A Successful candidate must sign their Declaration of Acceptance of office before they can act as Councillor. A Register of Interest must also be completed and returned to the Clerk within 28 days of their appointment. This register is published on the South Norfolk Council website.

**Procedures in an election year**

9. If following the close of nominations at an ordinary election of the Parish Council there is a quorum of elected members but some outstanding vacancies, the Clerk will advertise for interested candidates (as already detailed above) after the date of the election. The Council is able to co-opt at any time after the election. The procedures outlined from number 2 above will then be followed.

## Horsford Parish Council – Application form for co-option to the Parish Council

<b>Name:</b>	
Home telephone:  Mobile telephone:  Address:   Email address:	
<p>Please detail below why you consider you would be the best candidate for this vacancy. Points to cover should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Length of residence in the Parish (if appropriate)</li> <li>Membership and involvement with any community associations within the Parish or elsewhere</li> <li>Particular interests and concerns relating to the Parish</li> <li>Any previous appointments as a Parish, District or County Councillor (if appropriate)</li> <li>Any professional or work-related experience which could be utilised for the benefit of the Parish?</li> </ul> <p>If you wish to provide additional written information in support of your application this will be copied to all Councillors and treated in strict confidence.</p> <p>If necessary please continue on a separate sheet of paper.</p>	

## Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Parish Councillor you must be a British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union; and on the relevant date (that is the day you are co-opted/elected) be aged 18 years or over. Additionally you must be registered as a local government elector and meet one of the following qualifications:

- ☐ I have during the whole of 12 months on the relevant date resided in the parish or within 3 miles of it or
- ☐ I have during the whole of the 12 months, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish or
- ☐ My principal or only place of work during those 12 months has been in the parish (Please tick as appropriate)

1. Under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972, a person is disqualified from being elected as a Parish Councillor or being a member of the Local Council if he/she:
  - Holds any paid office or is employed by the Parish Council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Parish Council is represented or
  - Is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors (but see below) or
  - Has, within five years before the day of co-option/election or since his/her co-option/election 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 3 months without the option of a fine or
  - Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

### Notes:

- *Disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:*
  - i. *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.*
  - ii. *If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part.*
  - iii. *If the person is discharged without such a certificate.*

*In the case of i or ii above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In the case of iii above, it ceases on the expiry of 5 years from the date of discharge.*

I ..... (name) hereby confirm that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of Councillor at Horsford Parish Council and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record. I further confirm that I agree to Horsford Parish Council retaining this form for a period of six months from the date of this application (if unsuccessful) or for the duration of my period in office (if successful). I understand that Horsford Parish Council will only use my details for co-option purposes.

Signed..... Date.....