

Bere Ferrers Parish Council

Co-Option Policy

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Parish Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Parish Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

Councillors can legally approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option.

The Parish Council will advertise the vacancy in the local area, via the noticeboards located in Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers, the Council's website, the Council's social media and an advert will be placed in Bere Link Parish magazine.

Procedure for Conducting Co-options

On confirmation from Electoral Services that a casual vacancy must be filled by co-option, the Clerk will create an advertisement, notifying there is to be a co-option to fill the vacancy.

The Parish Council will advertise the vacancy in the local area, via the noticeboards located in Bere Alston and Bere Ferrers, the Council's website, the Council's social media and an advert will be placed in Bere Link Parish magazine.

The advertisement will state the rules for eligibility and direct interested parties to write to the Clerk confirming their eligibility to sit on the Parish Council, including a short statement explaining the reasons s/he wants to become a Parish Councillor.

There will be a deadline for responses of not less than 3 weeks from the date of the insertion. The date of the meeting when the co-option is to be made will be stated in the advertisement.

Nominees must also be made aware that canvassing of Council members will disqualify them from standing for the vacancy. Please see below Standing Order:

Canvassing councillors or the members of a committee or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from appointment. The Proper Officer shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.

At the Meeting

At the Council meeting when the co-option takes place, each nominee will have 3 minutes to introduce themselves, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a Councillor. After their presentation, Councillors may ask candidates a few questions.

Voting and Choosing of Councillor

The voting of the Councillor will be done in Part 2, which excludes the members of the press and public and conducted via a secret ballot, which will be administered by the Clerk. The votes will then be verified by an independent person. The successful candidate will be notified by the Clerk the following day.

If a candidate is a relative of a Councillor, that Councillor should declare a prejudicial interest and withdraw from the meeting.

The voting process will follow Standing Order 8(a), listed below. In order to be co-opted onto the Council, the candidate must receive an absolute majority of the vote of those present and voting.

Voting on Appointments

Where more than 2 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. Any tie may be settled by the Chairman's casting vote.

The Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'acceptance of office' paperwork and 'registration of interests' within 28 days of being elected.

If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single composite resolution. However, if the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes.

Elected Councillors

Successfully co-opted candidates become Councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member.

Co-opted members will be asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, their notification of Parish/Town Council Member interests and to agree to be bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct.

Reviewed and adopted by the Full Council	
Last Reviewed	5th October 2021. Minute No: 209
Next Review	October 2023