



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Co-option Policy & Procedure

Date of Approval:	17 th June 2019
Reviewed:	
Date of Re approval:	

Based on NALC briefing note L15-08

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by- election) has been called.
- 1.2 The Council should fill the vacancy by co-option as soon as practicable. It must do this, if the period of vacancy has six month or more to run. It may, but is not bound to do so, if less.

2. NOTICE OF VACANCIES

- 2.1 To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken the following procedure will be followed.
- 2.2 Following written confirmation, from the Electoral Services Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council, that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Town Clerk will:
 - a) Advertise the vacancy for 4 weeks on the Town Council's notice boards website and social media accounts;
 - b) Advise all Councillors, via email, that the co-option policy has been implemented.
- 2.3 NALC recommends that the public notice given by a council invites applications from candidates who satisfy (i) the eligibility criteria for being a councillor and (ii) the competencies listed in a person specification, agreed by the council.

3. ELIGIBILITY

- 3.1 To ensure that councils consider for co-option only those candidates who are eligible to be councillors, NALC recommends that councils require candidate(s) for co-option to declare or certify in writing that they:
 - meet the criteria for eligibility, set out in s. 79 of the 1972 Act, to be a member of the council

And

 - are not disqualified, pursuant to s.80 of the 1972 Act, to be a member of the council.
- 3.2 A council may need to investigate or obtain evidence about a candidate's eligibility to be a councillor if this is challenged.

4. PERSON SPECIFICATION

- 4.1 After receipt of a candidate's written self-certification which confirms he meets the statutory requirements to be a member of a local council, the council will need to fairly consider if candidates are suitable for co-option. Candidates may be assessed by whether or not they meet the criteria in a person specification, agreed by the council. An *example* of a person specification is attached as appendix A.
- 4.2 Copies of the applicant's application will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least seven days prior to the meeting of the Council, when the Co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.

5. DECISION MAKING

- 5.1 The decisions made by a local council about who to co-opt when casual vacancies arise should be transparent. In NALC's view, it would be difficult for a local council to argue that there are special reasons which justify excluding the public during a council meeting, when it is making decisions about a matter of public interest such as co-option.

6. REVIEW

- 6.1 Houghton Regis Town Council is committed to reviewing its policies and making improvements where possible. This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or as required by the Corporate Services Committee/Town Council?