



SHENSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

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CO-OPTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the policy and procedure for co-option to Shenstone Parish Council (SPC). SPC defined and owns this Policy, ensuring it meets legal requirements and best practices from the following reference documents:

Local Government Act 1972 sch12, para 39
Local Government Act 1972, s79 s80 s83
NALC Legal Briefing L15-08

The policy ensures that a fair, equitable and consistent process is utilised for all recruitment to SPC

2. Co-option Recruitment Process

- A casual vacancy arises if a councillor resigns, dies, or is disqualified for failing to fulfil their duties.
- The Parish Clerk will inform LDC Electoral Services Office of the vacancy.
- The co-option recruitment policy is initiated on receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed. The casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option.

Note and see also section 5 of this document: In the first instance the Parish Clerk will consider any individuals held on file who:

- Were **successful at interview** within the last twelve months.
- Were not recommended to Full Council, as they were not the highest scoring candidate.

If the above criteria are met, the Parish Clerk will:

- Contact by email, the candidate who has been on the list longest.
- Confirm they are still interested in joining the Parish Council.
- If so, the Chair of the Employment Committee will access their previous interview notes and at the next Full Council, recommended them for co-option, detailing with the reasons for this.

If there are no previously successful candidates on file, or they are no longer interested, or they did not secure enough votes at Full Council for co-option. The Parish Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks, or such other period as the Parish Council Employment Committee may agree. This may be on the Parish Council notice boards website Newsletters and/or any other suitable media likely to be accessed by potential candidates.
- It is permissible for existing Council Members to approach suitable candidates, in their network, and encourage them to apply. However, ALL candidates must follow the agreed application and interview process and will be assessed on *their* individual performance. Any recommendation statements from existing Council Members, will not be considered as part of the recruitment process.
- The advertisement will actively encourage potential applicants to attend at least one Parish Council meeting as observers.
- The Parish Clerk will advise LDC that the co-option policy has been instigated.

3. Review of Received Application

- After the closure dates for applications the Parish Clerk will complete the first paper sift to confirm the number of applications which meet the eligibility criteria. The Parish Council can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that they are:
 - 18 or over and a British citizen or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen; and at least one of the following apply:
 - They are an elector for the Parish and continues to be an elector; or
 - Has resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish; or
 - Has had his/her principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months; or
 - Has lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.

There are certain disqualifications for being a parish councillor, of which the main are (see s80 of the Local Government Act 1972):

- Holding a paid office or employment under the Parish Council;
- Bankruptcy;
- Having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months, without the option of a fine during the preceding five years; or

- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.
- If any of the applications do not meet the eligibility criteria the Parish Clerk will write to the applicant, advising the eligibility criteria not met and confirm their application has not been successful.
- There is no right of appeal, unless the candidate can provide evidence which conclusively proves an error has been made and they do in fact meet all the eligibility requirements.
- The Parish clerk will then advise the employment committee of the total number of eligible applications received
- Depending on the number of applications and vacancies the employment committee will reach a consensus by email on whether to interview or extend the application period, with the aim of increasing the number of applications.
- If the consensus is to extend the application period the Parish Clerk will
 - Contact the applicants and confirm their application has been received. However, the closure date for applications has now been extended. All applications will now be considered after the new closure date.
 - Readvertise the vacancy with the new closure date for applications.
- After the new closure date for applications has elapsed the Parish Clerk will
 - Confirm the eligibility criteria for any new applications has been met
 - Advise the employment committee of the total number of applicants.
- The Employment Committee will again review the total number of applicants against the total number of vacancies and by email reach a consensus on:
 - a) (Most likely) All the eligible applicants will be interviewed.
 - b) If the number of applications exceed the number of interviews, it is practicable to hold. The interview panel will convene (virtual meeting acceptable) and complete a paper sift. Providing brief rationale for each candidate on why they are/are not being invited to interview.

Note:

- c) It is only permissible to readvertise/extend the deadline for applications once, except when NO applications are received.
- d) If no applications are received, the advertisement can run for a series of further four-week periods, until the point an eligible application is received.
- e) If there is only one application for one vacancy. The candidate will still be interviewed and their suitability assessed using the interview process.
- f) The interview panel will make their recommendation to full council. They will then vote, if the recommendation is to co-opt the candidate.

4. The Interview Process.

- The Employment Committee are responsible for maintaining the interview questions and assessment criteria to be used at all interviews. This will be reviewed before each recruitment and if any changes are required these will be agreed and advised to the Parish Clerk.
- The Employment Committee will confirm to the Parish Clerk the candidates to be interviewed.
- The Parish Clerk will take action to:
 - Establish the Interview Panel, normally three established Parish Councillors, at least one of whom should have interview/recruitment experience. The Chair of the panel should also be nominated/agreed at this time.
 - Agree with the Interview Panel the date for the interviews.
 - Notify the agreed candidates of the interview date and their allotted time.
 - If appropriate, notify any candidates who failed the paper sift, providing constructive feedback and rationale.
 - Prepare the Candidate packs for the panel this will include:
 - Candidate completed Application Forms.
 - The agreed interview questions
 - An assessment sheet for each candidate.

Note: All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all parish councillors as strictly private and confidential

- On the day of the interview.
 - The panel will convene at least 30 minutes prior to the first interview and agree the format for the interview.
 - The Chair is normally responsible for welcoming the candidate and ensuring the interview environment is conducive to enabling the candidate to give their best performance.
 - The interviews questions will be asked, as agreed, and each member of the panel will independently complete the assessment sheet for each candidate.

Note: Normally the Parish Clerk will sit in on each interview and assist with any candidate questions the panel cannot answer. However, they do not have any input to the discussion and/or decision on who the successful candidate will be.

- On completion of the interviews the panel will discuss each candidate in turn and reveal their assessment score.
- Where two or more of the panel have differing views about a candidate, they should discuss the rationale for their scoring and then the panel should reach a consensus on:
 - If the candidate met the standard -Successful/Unsuccessful.

- A final score for each candidate.
- If the number of successful candidates is greater than the number of available vacancies the candidate with the highest consensus/final score will be appointed first.

5. Notification of Interview Results.

As soon as possible after the interviews the Parish Clerk will advise each candidate by email of their **interview** result. This will be one of the following:

- **Unsuccessful** – The candidate should be provided with constructive feedback and where appropriate, given advice on action they need to take to improve their chances of success, if they were to apply for a future vacancy.
- **Successful for a future vacancy** – The candidate will be advised they met the standard but were not the highest scoring candidate. Their name will be held on file and they will be considered for any future vacancy, **up to a period of twelve months**, without the need to be re-interviewed. However, in the event a vacancy arises, their appointment will only be confirmed after ratification by Full Council as detailed below.
- **Successful interview and co-option will be recommended to Full Council** – The candidate will be advised they met the interview standard. Their details will now be presented to the next full council who will then vote on their co-option. They will then be appointed to the Parish Council, subject to them receiving a majority vote in their favour.

6. Full Council Review of Interviews and Vote for Candidate Co-Option.

- Where the Parish Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Parish Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.
- The Chair of the Interview Panel will give a brief overview of all the candidates that applied for the vacancy in this order:
 - Any candidate failing the paper sift and the reasons for this.
 - Any candidate failing the interview and a brief overview of the reasons.
 - Candidates that met the interview standard and whose names have been placed on file. They may be presented to Full Council again, in the event of a vacancy within twelve months.
 - The successful candidate (s) being recommended for co-option, along with the reasons for this.
- As soon as the chair of the Interview Panel has finished giving their submissions, the Full Parish Council will proceed to a vote with:

- The successful candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance
- A vote by a show of hands
- For a candidate to be co-opted to the Parish Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting).
- The result of the vote will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting

7. Notification of Co-option

- As soon as possible after the Full Council the Parish Clerk will contact the candidate by email and confirm either:
 - a) They did not secure sufficient votes to be co-opted onto the Parish Council or more likely
 - b) They have now been successfully co-opted to the council.
- The Parish Clerk will then arrange to meet the candidate and secure from them:
 - A Declaration of Acceptance of Office, including an undertaking to abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct,
 - A Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests form.
 - A date for their induction training.
- The Clerk will notify LDC of the co-option of the new parish councillor and lodge the above documents with the Monitoring Officer at LDC within 28 days of the co-option.

END.

Document History

Version	Summary	Date
Draft A	Initial draft for review by the Policy Review Board – Accountability with the Finance Committee	31 Jul 25.
Draft B	Updated to reflect feedback post Finance Committee Review.	6 Aug 25.
Issue 1	Approved Full Council.	14 Oct 25.