

Walberswick Parish Council (WPC)

Adopted at November 2021 meeting of WPC

Procedures for co-option to fill a casual vacancy for Councillor

When a vacancy arises:

- When the Parish Clerk becomes aware that a casual vacancy has occurred due to the resignation, death or ineligibility of a Councillor, the Clerk informs the Council and informs East Suffolk District Council (ESDC) and supplies them with a copy of the requisite Notice of Vacancy for posting.
- In accordance with the relevant regulations, should the requisite 10 electors of the Parish not call for a poll (by-election) within the legally specified time period following the publication of the Notice of Vacancy, the Parish Clerk will be notified by East Suffolk District Council that the vacancy may be filled by co-option. The Clerk will, at the next meeting, include this notification by ESDC as an agenda item for information of the Council to be recorded in the minutes of meeting.

Obtaining expressions in interest:

- A vacancy will be advertised on both the Village Website and on the Parish Council Noticeboards. Other channels of local advertising may be used at the discretion of the Council. Interested parties will be given a minimum period of 14 calendar days to apply. This period may be extended at the discretion of the Council.
- An expression of interest from a candidate should be submitted to Parish Clerk and should include a written summary, which may include: reasons for wishing to fill the opening, previous community, council or charity work, other skills they can bring to the post, their interests and recent career history. Candidates for co-option to the Council must confirm their eligibility for the position of councillor within the statutory rules.

Consideration of expressions of interest:

- The Parish Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, will schedule a closed session of the Parish Council following the closure of the advertised posting assuming at least one expression of interest has been received. To protect the privacy of individuals who have submitted expressions of interest, the minutes of closed sessions will not name individuals under consideration.
- Prior to the consideration of co-option of a Councillor, the Parish Clerk shall take the necessary steps to ensure a candidate's eligibility to stand.
- The Parish Council, in closed session, may choose not to move forward with a prospective candidate, even if there is only one. The Council reserves the right not to make a co-option.
- When the Council has identified at least one candidate on which it is prepared to vote, then the co-option of a Councillor shall form a public agenda item for the next full meeting of the Council.

Selection:

- Following discussion at the closed session, a vote on the co-option will take place at the next full Council meeting. In the case where there is more than one candidate, a vote will be taken by secret signed ballot and all eligible candidates will be considered. The successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes. In the case where there are more than two candidates, and no clear majority, the candidate with the fewest votes will be dropped from the process and voting done again, until there is a clear majority. The Chair shall use their casting vote in the case of a tie. Only the Chair shall see the votes at this stage and shall declare dropped candidates as they occur and a winner at the appropriate time without revealing in public the number of votes cast for each candidate. The Clerk will later formally record the votes cast for each candidate but not for public record.
- If the successful candidate is present at the selection meeting, they shall be invited to sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and can then act as a councillor in line with normal election procedures. Otherwise, they will be informed by the Clerk following the meeting and invited to sign their Declaration prior to attending their first meeting.
- The newly appointed councillor must also complete their Declaration of Interests within 28 days of being appointed.