



ALDERHOLT PARISH COUNCIL

Casual Vacancy Co Option Policy

Introduction

A casual vacancy occurs when a councillor leaves office before their term of office ends, which can be due to the following reasons:

- a councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- a councillor resigns;
- a councillor dies;
- a councillor becomes ineligible for office or is disqualified
- a councillor fails for six months to attend a meeting when summoned to do so and their apologies are not accepted.

Town and Parish Councils are permitted to exercise the power to co-opt a person onto the Council to fill a casual vacancy when the requirements to hold a by-election have not been met (i.e. the vacancy has been the subject of a public notice and fewer than ten registered electors have requested a by-election by a deadline date specified by Dorset Council Electoral Services).

Insufficiency of candidates at an ordinary election also provides the parish/town council with authority to exercise its rights to co-opt any person or persons to fill any vacancies within thirty-five days following the date of the ordinary election.

Co-Option Procedure

When a casual vacancy arises, the Clerk will notify the Returning Officer at Dorset Council Electoral Services of a casual vacancy and then give public notice of the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request a by-election. This occurs when ten electors write to Dorset Council stating that an election is requested. The vacancy notice must be displayed on the noticeboard and website for 14 working days (this does not include weekends, bank holidays, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday or any day appointed for public thanksgiving or national days of mourning).

If ten electors do not request a by-election within 14 days of the public notice being posted, the Returning Officer will notify the Clerk in writing that the Council can proceed with co-option.

The Council will then advertise the councillor vacancy by publishing notices on the noticeboard, website, social media platforms and place an article in the Parish News to encourage potential candidates to apply. Applicants will need to complete and submit

an application form (attached below) by the set closing date, which includes their reasons for applying to become a councillor together with their legal qualifications and confirmation they are not disqualified from applying. A contact point to obtain more information and where information can be sourced electronically will also be included in the notice.

The Parish Council will then consider all applications received at a full council meeting. Councillors will receive a copy of the application forms at least three clear days prior to the meeting taking place. All applications will be marked 'strictly confidential' prior to circulation. Only councillors present at the meeting may nominate, second or vote upon the person to fill the vacancy.

Co-Option Agenda Item

All applicants will be invited to attend the full council meeting and will have five minutes to introduce themselves to members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of Alderholt Parish Council.

After presentations have been made, councillors will have the opportunity to ask applicants a few questions before proceeding to vote. If an applicant is unable to attend the meeting, the application can still be considered, and voting will be based on the application only.

Councillors will proceed to vote with each applicant being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance and a vote by a show of hands. The Chair will place the names of those nominated into alphabetical order and proceed to the vote. If there is only one vacancy, a councillor may only propose or second one applicant.

In order for an applicant to be elected to the council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (i.e. more than half of the votes cast by councillors present and voting). 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 be eliminated and further rounds will take place until a candidate achieves an absolute majority. The Chair has a casting vote if required in accordance with the council's standing orders.

Once elected, the co-opted councillor must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office form and agree to abide by the Council's code of conduct and must complete the electronic Register of Interests form within twenty-eight days of being elected which is submitted to and published by Dorset Council. If the co-opted councillor is not present at the meeting councillors would need to agree they sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office in accordance with Local Government Act 1972, section 83(3), either before or at the next Full Council meeting.

A co-opted councillor is no different to any other councillor as co-option is a legitimate form of election as part of the election process.



ALDERHOLT PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM

Full Name:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Mobile Telephone Number:	
Email:	
Please answer the Yes/No questions carefully as they set out the Legal Qualifications for being a Parish Councillor. QUALIFICATIONS Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country? Yes/No Are you 18 or over? Yes/No (You only need one of the following four qualifications but please say Yes to all that apply) Are you on the electoral register for the parish? Yes/No Have you lived either in the parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year? Yes/No Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the parish for at least a year? Yes/No Have you had your only or main place of work in the parish for at least a year? Yes/No DISQUALIFICATIONS Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order or interim debt relief restrictions order Yes/No	

Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine? Yes/No Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority? Yes/No Are you subject to the notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, and the ordinary period allowed for making an appeal or application in respect of the order or notification has passed. Yes/No
Employment Status/Occupation:
Please give a brief description of yourself and why you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor:
What do you expect from being a Councillor?
Full Council meetings are held in the evening on the second Monday of every month, can you confirm you will be able to attend these meetings:
Do you have any particular skills that you can bring to the council?
Do you have any previous experience of Local Government or Committee working?

Are there any local issues that you are particularly interested in that you believe could be of benefit to the community?

Are there any questions you would like to ask the council?

I confirm that I meet the required criteria to become a Parish Councillor

Signature:

Date: