

BACTON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Councillor David Chambers

Clerk: Suzanne Lupin

email:parishclerk@bacton-pc.gov.uk

Willowbrook Cottage, Church Road,

telephone: 07588 734168

Bacton, Suffolk IP14 1TU.

Co-Option Policy & Procedure for Bacton Parish Council

This policy sets out in detail the circumstances which permit and legislation relating to the co-option of persons to fill the vacancies within the parish council and is based on NALC Legal Briefing L15-08 which recommends good practice to be taken in respect of a co-option process.

Notification

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A seat has been left vacant because no eligible candidate stood for election at the full elections for a new council. In this instance the Parish Clerk would be notified of vacancies by MSDC Electoral Services. Efforts must be made to fill the vacancies by co-option.
- When a Councillor vacates their post.

The Parish Council is not obliged to co-opt to fill any vacancy. Even if the Council invites applications for co-option it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply. However, it is not desirable that electors be left partially or fully unrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty, given that some absence is unavoidable at times.

Application Process to be Followed

Upon receipt of written notification from the Electoral Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council that a casual vacancy may be filled by means of co-option:

1. The Parish Clerk will announce the vacancy/vacancies to be filled by co-option within 21 days of receipt of the written notification by means of displaying a Notice on the Council Notice boards, website and social media page. A copy of the notice will also be sent to the Parish Magazine.
2. The Co-option Notice will include the closing date of requests for consideration (between 14 and 21 days after the date of the display) and the number of vacancies.
3. The Parish Clerk will advise the council when the Co-option process has been instigated by notifying all councillors.
4. Applicants will be emailed and are recommended to read the publication, "The Good Councillor Guide" which explains more about the role and the responsibilities of councillors.

5. The process for considering potential co-optees whereby discussion of individual candidates' suitability and merits, including the possibility of meeting the candidate(s), would be undertaken by an ad hoc working party (meetings of which would not be public). The ad hoc working party would then make a recommendation to the Council which would then simply vote on whether to accept the working group's recommendations. This approach would be in accordance with the statute that requires co-option decisions to be made by the Council but avoids the complexity of interviewing and discussing candidates at a public meeting.
6. If all council seats are occupied up to eight Councillors could be members of the ad hoc working group and otherwise the maximum would be the current membership minus one member.
7. The name of the recommend candidate will be proposed and seconded at a full Council meeting. Councillors shall vote on the proposal by show of hands, or, if at least two members so request, by signed ballot. In the case of a tied vote the Chairman of the meeting has a second and casting vote.
8. After the vote has been concluded the Chairman of the meeting will declare the successful candidate duly co-opted and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office take their seat immediately. Within 28 days of co-option the successful applicant is also required to complete a Register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests which will be provided by the Parish Clerk

PERSON SPECIFICATION

National Association of Local Councils (NALC) legal briefing suggests a personal specification that identifies attributes that a Parish Council should be looking for when co-opting a councillor.

We welcome people with a wide range of life skills and experience that reflects the local community. We are looking for councillors who can bring enthusiasm and commitment as well as some of the following:

COMPETENCY	DEMONSTRATED BY:
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community.• Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community.• Good interpersonal skills.• Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly.• Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff.• Ability and willingness to work with the council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish councils, principal authority, charities).• Ability and willingness to undertake relevant training.
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the council (or the meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) in the evening and events in the evening and at weekends.• Flexible and committed to the Council.• Enthusiastic.

Bacton Parish Council Co-option & Eligibility Application Form

Contact Details (Block Capitals please)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email address:

Home Tel. No:

Mobile Tel. No:

Please briefly outline why you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor :

Please tell us something about the skills you feel you will bring to the Council, for example experience, interests and skills:

Please add any further information you would like to include to support your application:

Please inform us of any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application? (E.g. if you are related to an employee of the Council / would require assistance during Council meetings with a disability):

Please have this application form signed by a proposer and a seconder.

Proposer Name & Address:

Secunder Name & Address:

Signed:

Bacton Parish Councillor Eligibility

In order to be eligible for co-option as a Bacton Parish Councillor you must be:

A British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
18 years of age or over on the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are co-opted).

You must additionally be able to meet one of the following qualifications, please tick all that apply:

1. I am registered as a local government elector for the parish of Bacton; or
2. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish of Bacton; or
3. My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish of Bacton; or
4. I have during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option resided in the parish of Bacton or within three miles

Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if he/she:

1. Holds any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented; or
2. is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors or
3. has within five years before the day of co-option, or since his/her co-option, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
4. is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

I (insert name) hereby confirm, that I am eligible to apply for the vacancy of Bacton Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed Dated

Please return your completed application form to:

Suzanne Lupin Parish Clerk

Bacton Parish Council, Willowbrook Cottage, Church Road, Bacton, Suffolk, IP14 4LW

parishclerk@bacton-pc.gov.uk