



WEST HANNINGFIELD PARISH COUNCIL



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CO-OPTION POLICY

Re-Adopted 10th March 2025 (With Amendments)

The co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Parish Council and no poll (by-election) has been called.

To ensure a fair and transparent process, West Hanningfield Parish Council will follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Initiating the Co-Option Process

Upon receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services of the City Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by co-option, the Clerk will:

- a) Advertise the vacancy for four weeks using multiple channels, including:
 - Parish Council noticeboards
 - The Parish Council website and social media pages
 - The Parish Council newsletter (if publication timing allows)
 - Any other local community networks, as appropriate.
- b) Inform all Parish Councillors that the co-option process has commenced.
- c) Provide guidance to prospective candidates on the role, responsibilities, and conduct expected of a Parish Councillor.

2. Application Process

Applicants for co-option will be asked to:

- a) Complete a short application form (attached to this policy).
- b) Confirm their eligibility to serve as a Parish Councillor as per statutory regulations (criteria attached).

- c) Attend at least one council or committee meeting before the interview meeting to gain an understanding of council business. Additional attendance is encouraged but not mandatory.
 - d) Consider the committee and working party structure and indicate on the application form their areas of interest.
 - e) Review the Parish Council's action plan and specify any projects of particular interest.
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3. Co-Option Meeting & Voting Process

An **Extraordinary Co-option Meeting** of the Full Council will be convened on the same day as a Full Council meeting for the purpose of meeting with prospective Councillors and voting on their appointment.

- The Clerk will circulate application forms to all Councillors with the agenda and meeting pack before the meeting. These documents will be treated as **strictly confidential** and handled in accordance with data protection laws. Unsuccessful applications will be securely disposed of after the process.

Voting Procedure

Voting will follow statutory requirements, and a successful candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes from those present and voting.

- Councillors will vote by **written ballot** (not by show of hands). However, a Councillor may request a recorded vote before moving to the next item of business.
- In the case of a tie, the Chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

Scenario	Voting Process
One candidate for one position	The candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes from those present and voting.
Multiple candidates for one position	If no candidate receives an absolute majority in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated, and voting continues until a candidate secures a majority.
Multiple candidates for multiple positions	If the number of candidates equals the number of positions, each candidate must still receive an absolute majority. If there are more candidates than positions, elimination rounds will continue until the correct number of candidates receive a majority.
Fewer candidates than positions	Each candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes to be co-opted.

4. Post-Vote Process

After the vote, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected.

The newly co-opted Councillor must:

- Sign the **Declaration of Acceptance of Office** before assuming their role.
 - Familiarise themselves with Parish Council **policies, procedures, and responsibilities** as per the Parish Council's website.
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CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM

Name: _____

Address for Correspondence:

Telephone/Mobile/Email:

(Councillors are expected to be able to receive mail electronically)

I confirm that I meet the eligibility criteria to serve as a Parish Councillor as set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (e.g., I am over 18, a British/Commonwealth/EU citizen, and I live work or own land within the Parish).

☐ Yes ☐ No

Experience & Interests

1. **What experience or skills can you bring to West Hanningfield Parish Council?** *(If necessary, continue on a separate sheet.)*

2. **How would you like to contribute to the Parish Council?** *(If necessary, continue on a separate sheet.)*

3. **Which projects on the current action plan interest you?** *(If necessary, continue on a separate sheet.)*

4. **Is there any other relevant information you would like to share?** *(If necessary, continue on a separate sheet.)*

I, **(Insert Name)**, confirm that I have read and understood the eligibility criteria and that the information given in this form is true and accurate.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Please return this form, along with a copy of your passport, driving licence, or proof of address (utility bill), to the address below or via email.

CO-OPTION ELIGIBILITY FORM

1. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for co-option as a Parish Councillor, you must be a British subject, a citizen of the Commonwealth, or a European Union citizen. You must be at least 18 years old on the "relevant date" (the day of nomination). Additionally, at least one of the following qualifications must apply:

- ☐ I am registered as a local government elector for the parish.
- ☐ I have occupied land or other premises in the parish as an owner or tenant for the whole of the past twelve months.
- ☐ My principal or only place of work during the past twelve months has been within the parish.
- ☐ I have resided in the parish, or within three miles of it, for the whole of the past twelve months.

2. Disqualifications

Under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972, a person is disqualified from serving as a Local Councillor if they:

- ☐ Hold any paid office or employment with the local council (except for the office of Chairman) or a joint committee where the Council is represented.
- ☐ Have been declared bankrupt or made an arrangement with creditors (subject to certain conditions).
- ☐ Have, within the past five years, been convicted of an offence and sentenced to at least three months' imprisonment (whether suspended or not) without the option of a fine.
- ☐ Are disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the eligibility and disqualification criteria.

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Please return this form with your application.