

CO-OPTION POLICY AND NEW COUNCILLOR PROCEDURE

Steeple Claydon Parish Council

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Steeple Claydon Parish Council. The co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

2. Co-option

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

- A councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- A councillor resigns;
- A councillor dies;
- A councillor becomes disqualified; or
- A councillor fails for six months to attend meetings of a council committee or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the Council a meeting of an outside body.

The Parish Council is required to notify the Unitary Council of the casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. If ten electors write to the Unitary Council within fourteen working days requesting an election, then one is called. A polling station will be set up by the Unitary Council and parishioners will be asked to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of a nomination paper. The Parish Clerk will advertise the process on notice boards, website and any other means in use by the council at the time. The Parish Council will be required to pay the costs of the election. If only one candidate applies, they are elected without a ballot.

If residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, the Parish Council is able to co-opt.

3. Confirmation of Co-option

On receipt of written confirmation from the Unitary Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Parish Council will advertise the vacancy on the website, Facebook page and in the newsletter. Councillors are also encouraged to approach anyone who meets the criteria below.

4. Eligibility of Candidates

The Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- He/she is an elector for the parish or,
- has resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land or other premises in the parish or, had his/her principal place of work in the parish, or
- has lived within three miles (direct) of the parish.

There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main ones are:

- holding a paid office under the local authority;
- bankruptcy;

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- 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 five years preceding the election;
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

5. Co-Option Process

Candidates will be requested to submit information about themselves using the adopted application form at least five working days before the next meeting of Full Council. This information will be circulated by the clerk to councillors, and an item to co-opt a councillor will be placed on the agenda of the meeting. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and Councillors as strictly private and confidential.

Candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.

If there is more than one candidate, the Councillors vote on who to co-opt.

This decision-making process will take place in the open part of the meeting.

No co-option may take place outside of a Full Council meeting.

An additional meeting may be called if necessary.

Councillors elected by co-option are full members of Council.

Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting

6. After Co-option

The co-opted member must sign an acceptance of office form. He/she can then take their place and join the meeting. A register of interests form will also be given. This must be returned to the Parish Clerk, or sent directly to the District Council, within three weeks. This document will be published on the District Council's website.

The Parish Clerk will, within five working days of the meeting, send the new Councillor by email a copy of the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as well as a link to the website which contains additional policies. The dates of future meetings and available training will also be given.

By accepting office all new councillors will be expected to:

- Undertake training for new councillors, as a minimum. However, it is encouraged the councillors attend as many courses as possible, to ensure that councillors have a thorough understanding of the functions and legislature of parish councils;
- Use a parish council email address exclusively for all formal Council business and they should not be used in any other way; This email will be subject to any Freedom of Information requests made.
- Ensure they do not make reference to the Council or its services or represent themselves on behalf of the Council on social media without formal permission from the Council to do so.

Policy written August 2023

Steeple Claydon Parish Council.
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APPLICATION FOR CO-OPTION

Thank you for your interest in becoming a parish Councillor. Please provide the below information to assist in the council making their decision

Full Name and Title

Home Address

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Home Telephone.....

Mobile Telephone

Email Address

About You: Please provide the council with some background information about yourself:

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Reasons for applying: Please provide the council with your reasons for wanting to become a Parish Councillor.

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Signature

Date

Please return your completed application to the Clerk to the Parish Council.

Hannah Holmes, Clerk to the Parish Council

clerk@steepleclaydonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Clerk post-box for correspondence is number 48 - outside the Village Library door.

Postal - The Parish Clerk, The Village Hall, 48 Queen Catherine Road, Steeple Claydon MK18 2PY

Your application will be considered at the next available Parish Council meeting, the Clerk will be in touch to let you know the date and time.

At that meeting a vote will be held to decide your co-option to the Parish Council.

Data Protection Act (2018): The information provided on the application form will remain private and confidential.

1. In order to be eligible for co-option as a Parish Councillor, you must be a British Subject, or a citizen of the commonwealth or the European Union; and on the date of the poll or election, 18 years of age or over; and be able to meet one of the following qualifications set out below:

Please tick which one applies to you:

- a) I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
- b) 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; or
- c) My principle or only place of work during those twelve months have been in the parish; or
- d) I have during the whole of the twelve months resided in the parish or within three miles of it.

2. 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 Local Council if he/she:

- a) 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
- b) Is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors (but see below); or
- c) Has within five years before the day of election, or since his/her election, 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
- d) Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:

- I. If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged;
- II. If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part;
- III. If the person is discharged without such a certificate In i and ii above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In iii, it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.

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DECLARATION

I..... herby confirm that I am eligible for the
vacancy of Steeple Claydon Parish Councillor; and the information given on this form is a true and
accurate record.

Signature.....

Date.....