

DERSINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COOPTION POLICY

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure that there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the cooption of councillors to Dersingham Parish Council. The cooption procedure is entirely managed by Dersingham Parish Council and this policy will ensure that the process is fair and equitable.

When can cooption be considered:

- A councillor fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time
- A councillor resigns
- A councillor dies
- A councillor becomes disqualified
- A councillor fails for a period of six consecutive months to attend meetings of the council, its committees or sub committees or to attend as a representative of the Council a meeting of an outside body.

When a vacancy occurs the parish council has to notify the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and then advertise the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. If 10 or more electors write to the Borough Council within 14 days an election will take place. The parish council will have to pay the costs of the election. If no election is called the parish council will then advertise the vacancy (or vacancies) for 4 weeks on its noticeboards and website.

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

- They are an elector for the parish
- Has resided in the parish for the past 12 months or rented/tenanted land or other premises in the parish
- Has their principal place of work in the parish
- Lives within 3 miles of the parish boundary

There are certain factors that will disqualify candidates:

- Bankruptcy
- Having been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than 3 months, without the option of a fine during the preceding 5 years
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices

Candidates found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

What to do if you would like to become a Parish Councillor

Candidates should submit an expression of interest in filling a vacancy to the Business Manager. They will then be invited to meet with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. They will be asked to fill in an application form and confirm their eligibility for the position of councillor. Copies of the candidate's applications will be circulated to all councillors by the Business Manager at least 3 clear days prior to the next available meeting of the full Council when the cooption will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Business Manager and councillors as confidential. It should be noted that the council is not obliged to fill any vacancy.

What happens next

At the meeting when cooption is being considered candidates will be asked to briefly introduce themselves, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a parish councillor. If councillors wish to discuss the merits of the candidates the Council may resolve to exclude members of the press and public. After this discussion the meeting will be reopened to the press and public and if there are more candidates than vacancies there will be a vote. If there is no candidate with an overall majority (50% of votes cast) the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. If necessary further rounds of voting will then take place.

After the votes have been concluded, the Chairman will declare the successful candidate (or candidates) duly elected and after signing their declaration of acceptance of office, they may take their seat immediately. Successful candidates are councillors in their own right and are no different to any other councillor. Their term of office runs to the next election for the parish council.

The Business Manager will notify the Borough Council of the new councillor appointment. The successful candidate (or candidates) must complete the registration of interests within 28 days.

Re-adopted by Dersingham Parish Council on: 25.03.2024