

DALHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Co-option Policy setting out the procedure for co-opting to a casual vacancy

1. The clerk will notify West Suffolk Council when a vacancy arises.
2. The Notice of Vacancy will be displayed on the Parish Noticeboard.
3. If no request for an election is received by West Suffolk Council by the date on the Notice of Vacancy, Election Services will advise the Parish Council that it may co-opt to the vacancy. Co-option is the process by which the Parish Council selects a new councillor as an agenda item within a monthly Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council manages the process of co-option by itself and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure set out below.
4. Dalham Parish Council invites interested candidates to write to the Clerk by a specified date confirming their eligibility to stand and writing a short paragraph explaining why they would like to become a parish councillor. Eligibility criteria are as follows:

A candidate must:

- be at least 18 years' old
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union, and meet at least one of the following four qualifications:
 - a) Be registered as a local government elector for the parish/community in which they wish to stand from the day of their nomination onwards.
 - b) Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish/community area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of the nomination and the day of election.
 - c) The main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of the nomination and the day of election has been in the parish/community area.
 - d) Have lived in the parish/community area or within three miles of it during the whole of the 12 months before the day of the nomination and the day of election.

Disqualifications

A candidate is disqualified if:

- employed by the parish/community council or holds a paid office under the parish/community council (including joint boards or committees).
- Subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.
- disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).
- A person may also be disqualified from election if they have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the First-tier Tribunal (formerly the Adjudication Panel for England) or the Adjudication Panel

5. If there is more than one candidate, the letters received are circulated to councillors ahead of the meeting at which a parish councillor is to be co-opted. At the Parish Council meeting candidates are invited to say something about themselves and councillors have the

opportunity to ask the candidates questions. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes.

6. In a closed session of the Parish Council without the public present, members consider the candidates and voting takes place. The Parish Council has no obligation to co-opt a councillor it considers unsuitable.
7. The Chairman will ask the councillors present to nominate a candidate. Candidates will require a proposer and seconder to progress to the voting stage. If there is only one vacancy, a councillor may only nominate or second one candidate. One candidate needs to receive an absolute majority of votes. If there is not an absolute majority, the candidate will not be co-opted.
8. The Chairman will then place the names of those nominated into alphabetical order and proceed to vote. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
9. Voting will be in accordance with Standing Orders by a show of hands and will continue until one candidate has received an absolute majority of those councillors present. At this stage, the successful candidate will be declared co-opted.
10. Should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. Voting will then take place for the remaining candidates until one person receives an absolute majority.
11. The candidates will be invited back into the room and the successful candidate is then declared co-opted to the Parish Council.
12. The successful candidate is a councillor in their own right and is no different to any other member; co-option is a legitimate form of election as part of the election process
13. All elected councilors will join the Parish Council after the election is complete.

This policy was adopted at the meeting on 16th July 2020 and reviewed annually.

Next review date: November 2025