

Bradwell Parish Council



Co-Option Policy

1. Introduction

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

1.2 Whenever the need for co-option arises Bradwell Parish Council will seek and encourage applications from those who meet the qualifying criteria and are eligible to stand as a councillor. Councillors can legally approach individuals to suggest they may wish to apply.

1.3 All vacancies will be advertised on the parish council noticeboard, the website and the local Parish magazine.

1.4 The advertisement to co-opt will include:

- The method by which applications can be made
- The closing date for all applications
- A contact point to obtain more information

1.5 The co-option policy will be reviewed annually.

2. Co-Option (Stage 1)

2.1 The co-option of a parish councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the council and no by- election has been called. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- 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 six (6) consecutive months to attend meetings of a council, committee, or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the council at a meeting of an outside body

2.2 The Parish Council must notify Great Yarmouth Borough Council of a Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten or more electors write to Great Yarmouth Borough Council that an election is requested.

2.3 If ten or more residents do not request a by- election within fourteen working days of the vacancy being posted, as advised by Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Bradwell Parish Council is able to co-opt a councillor of their own choosing from the applications submitted.

2.4 On receipt of written confirmation from Great Yarmouth Borough Council Electoral Services the vacancy can be filled by co-option. The Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the Council notice boards and website
- Advise the council that the co-option policy has been instigated.

Bradwell Parish Council



3. Co-Option (Stage 2)

3.1 Insufficiency of candidates at an ordinary election also provides the Parish Council with authority to exercise its rights to co-opt any person or persons to fill any vacancies within 35 days following the date of said ordinary election.

3.2 Bradwell Parish Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the Parish Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates who apply neither is the Council obliged to give their reasons for refusing to co-opt an applicant.

3.3 However, it is not desirable that electors in a particular Parish be left partially or fully underrepresented for a significant length of time. Neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the Parish Council if there are insufficient councillors to share the workload; equitably; to provide a broad cross-section of skills and interests; or the achieve meeting quorums without difficulty.

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

4. Eligibility of Candidates

4.1 The Parish Council can consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that the applicant:

- is an elector for the parish; or
- has resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the parish; or
- has his/her principal place of work in the parish; or
- lives within a three miles radius (direct) of the parish

4.2 Expressions of interest rather than proper applications will not be considered.

4.3 There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main are (Local Government Act 1972)

- Holding a paid office for the Parish Council under the local authority
- The holder of a bankruptcy restrictions order
- 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; and
- Being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practice

4.4 The applicant is invited to attend a formal discussion with the Staffing and Standards Committee, where it will be decided if all eligibility criteria has been met, and whether the candidate should make it through to the next step.

4.5 The applicant is then required to attend one or more of either Committee or full Parish Council meetings if they so wish to decide whether they still want to pursue their application.

Bradwell Parish Council



4.6 All eligible candidates shall be invited by letter to attend the next suitable and available full council meeting following the application deadline, which is the next full council meeting. However, if the candidates are unable to attend, the deadline will not be extended.

5. Applications

5.1 To assist candidates

Appendix A provides a guide to those criteria that the Parish Council would expect from parish councillors. This list is not exhaustive but provides candidates with some guidance on areas they may wish to include in their application forms.

5.2 Candidates will be requested to:

Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules and submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short statement.

5.3 Candidates will be encouraged to contact the Clerk for further information about the Parish Council, its current priorities and working arrangements, prior to submitting a formal application.

5.4 Following receipt of applications, the next suitable council meeting will have an agenda.

5.5 Copies of the candidate's application will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least 3 clear days prior to the meeting of the full council when the co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as Strictly Private and Confidential.

5.6 Candidates will be sent a full agenda of the meeting at which they are to be considered for appointment, together with a copy of the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of Bradwell Parish Council. Candidates will also be informed that they will be invited to speak in support of their application at the meeting.

6. At the Co-Option Meeting

6.1 At the co-option meeting candidates will be given an allotted time and will be asked to adhere to that time so there will be no overlap of applicants. Each candidate will have a maximum of five (5) minutes to introduce themselves to members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to join Bradwell Parish Council. The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidate to speak.

6.2 After the presentation, members may ask questions of the candidate for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

6.3 A ten (10) minute break will be taken between candidates to prevent any overlap and to allow members an opportunity to discuss each applicant.

6.4 Once all the candidates have finished giving their submissions, the Council will proceed to a vote on the suitability of each candidate utilising the 'person specification' criteria set out in Appendix A and any personal statements provided by candidates.

6.5 Where the Council wishes to discuss the merits of candidates and inevitably their personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Parish Council will resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.

Bradwell Parish Council



6.6 If a candidate is a relative of a Councillor, that Councillor should declare a non-registerable interest and withdraw from the meeting.

6.7 Any meetings prior to the formal Council meeting where co-option is to take place between a Councillor who has not declared a personal interest will be deemed to be invalid. Total impartiality is required at all times during the process.

6.8 The voting process for proposed candidates will be carried out in the public session.

6.9 In order for a candidate to be elected to the council it will be necessary for them to obtain a proposer, seconder and an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting).

6.10 Only councillors present at the meeting may vote upon a person to fill this vacancy. Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled. The Chair has the casting vote.

6.11 Any application can be considered in a candidate's absence, but if successful, members would need him or her to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office at the next Council Meeting.

6.12 The Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new Councillor appointment, initiate 'Acceptance of Office' paperwork and 'Registration of Interests' within 28 days of being elected.

6.13 If insufficient candidates come forward, or no candidate is elected, the process may continue whereby the vacancies could be advertised again. The Council does not have to accept any candidate even if there is only one Candidate for one position, subject to a council decision.

6.14 Any candidate(s) found to be offering inducements of any kind will be disqualified.

7. Elected Councillors (Co-Option)

7.1 Successfully co-opted candidates become councillors with immediate effect and are no different to any other member. They will be asked to sign the Declaration of Office at the next meeting.

7.2 Co-opted members will, once they have signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and agreed to be bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct, take their seat at Council and are then able to be appointed to a committee and/or as a representative to local organisations.

Bradwell Parish Council



APPENDIX A - CO-OPTION CRITERIA

COMPETENCY	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. ▪ Forward thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to listen constructively ▪ A good team player ▪ Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects ▪ Solid interest in local matters ▪ Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community ▪ Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others views and accept majority decisions. ▪ 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 induction training and other relevant training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body ▪ Experience of working with voluntary and or local community / interest groups ▪ Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish Councils or local authorities ▪ Experience of delivering presentations
Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends. 	

APPENDIX B - CO-OPTION APPLICATION FORM

Bradwell Parish Council



Qualifications

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of a European Union country?
Yes/No

Are you 18 or over?
Yes/No

(You only need one of the following four qualifications but please say Yes to all that apply)

Are you on the electoral register for the parish of Bradwell? Yes/No

Have you lived either in the parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?
Yes/No

Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the parish of Bradwell for at least a year?
Yes/No

Have you had your only or main place of work in the parish of Bradwell for at least a year?
Yes/No

Disqualifications

Are you an employee of Bradwell Parish Council? Yes/No

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order? Yes/No

Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine? Yes/No

Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority? Yes/No

What can you bring to the council?

Please tell us something about what experience you might bring to the Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business, or trade union experience.

Please tell us something about skills you might bring to the Council, for example, professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise

Bradwell Parish Council



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Please give us an indication of why you are interested in being a parish councillor

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Contact details

Full name	
Home address	
Postcode	
Telephone	
Alternative telephone	
Email	

Signed _____

Date

Please return to the Parish Clerk

clerk@bradwellparishcouncil.co.uk

Leo Coles Pavilion, Green Lane, Bradwell, NR31 8QG

Tel. 01493 444478