



Longburrow Hall, Park Lane
Stokenchurch, High Wycombe
Bucks HP14 3TQ

CO-OPTION POLICY

1. Purpose and Legal Basis

1.1 This policy sets out the procedure to be followed by **Stokenchurch Parish Council** (hereinafter referred to as "**the council**") when exercising its power to co-opt a person to fill a casual vacancy.

1.2 It is based on guidance from NALC Legal Briefing L15-08: Good Practice for Selection of Candidates for Co-option to Local Councils and informed by the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Circumstances for Co-option

2.1 The Council may co-opt a person to fill a casual vacancy where:

- a vacancy exists on the Council;
- a public notice of vacancy has been issued by the Proper Officer; and
- fewer than ten registered electors have requested an election by the District Returning Officer's deadline.

2.2 Where these conditions are met, the Council is legally entitled to fill the vacancy by co-option.

3. Advertising the Vacancy

3.1 Although not statutory, the Council follows NALC best practice by advertising vacancies to promote openness, transparency, and wider community engagement, including outreach to younger residents.

3.2 Vacancies will be advertised via public notice, the Council website, and other local communication channels.

3.3 The notice will invite expressions of interest from eligible residents (aged 18 and above) and specify a closing date.

4. Applications and Information Required

4.1 Applicants must submit their expression of interest in writing, including:

Reason for wishing to become a Parish Councillor

Details of previous community or council experience

Skills, knowledge, or experience they can bring to the Council

5. Eligibility and Disqualification

5.1 Prior to consideration, the Clerk will confirm that applicants:

meet the eligibility requirements of Section 79, Local Government Act 1972, including being at least 18 years old; and

are not disqualified under Section 80, Local Government Act 1972.

6. Consideration and Selection Process

6.1 Applications will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

6.2 At the meeting:

- a. Clerk confirms eligibility of each applicant
- b. Chair invites Members to discuss applications with reference to the person specification
- c. Council votes on acceptability of candidates

6.3 Voting will follow Schedule 12, Paragraph 39, Local Government Act 1972:

Absolute majority required for each candidate

If more candidates than vacancies, the lowest vote-getter is removed and voting continues until vacancies match candidates

6.4 Council agrees the order in which successful candidates are approached for co-option.

7. Offer and Acceptance of Co-option

7.1 Clerk offers co-option to successful candidates in the agreed order.

7.2 If a candidate declines, the next on the list is approached until the vacancy is filled or the list is exhausted.

8. Ratification and Administration

8.1 Accepted co-options are ratified at the next Full Council meeting.

8.2 Clerk will:

- Notify Electoral Services
- Arrange completion of Declaration of Acceptance of Office
- Ensure Register of Interests is completed and published

9. Failure to Fill a Vacancy

9.1 If no candidate accepts, the process is repeated until the vacancy is filled or until the next ordinary election.

10. Person Specification – Encouraging Young Residents

Mandatory for all applicants

- Eligibility under Local Government Act 1972 (18+)
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Essential Criteria

- Commitment to the community
 - Ability to attend meetings and participate constructively
 - Teamworking and respectful discussion
 - Represent community views
 - Good governance and confidentiality
 - Basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills
 - Willingness to undertake training
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Desirable Knowledge, Skills, Experience

- Community, voluntary, or public sector experience
- Understanding local issues
- Committee or board experience
- Strategic thinking, policy development
- Project planning and delivery
- Communication and engagement

(Encouraged but not required)

Highly Desirable Additional Council Priority Skills

- Financial management (budgeting, accounting, audit, risk)
- Legal or governance knowledge (local government, planning, contracts, employment)
- Grant funding (identifying opportunities, preparing applications, managing grants)
- Procurement, tendering, contract management
- Asset management, estates, infrastructure oversight

(Highly valued but absence does not preclude co-option)

Personal Qualities

- Commitment to public service
- Sound judgement
- Ability to consider alternative viewpoints
- Reliability and preparedness
- Confidence to contribute positively

(Evaluated in selection process)

Equality & Inclusivity

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity. Applications are considered fairly regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics.

Diversity, including younger residents (18+), is actively encouraged.

Compliance with Equalities Act 2010; supports transparent and inclusive co-option

11. How to Apply:

Written expression of interest detailing motivation, relevant experience, and skills.

12. Selection Process:

Eligibility check → Council discussion → Vote → Offer → Ratification

Date of policy: 11/03/26

Approving committee:SPC

Date of committee meeting:11/03/26

Policy effective from:11/03/26

Date for next review:11/03/29

— policy ends here —