



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Co-Option Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	25/03/2026	35/2026/03	25/03/2029

1. Introduction and Legal Framework

1.1 This policy sets out the procedure to be followed by Noak Bridge Parish Council when filling a casual vacancy in the office of parish councillor by co-option.

1.2 The policy is made having regard to:

- Section 87(2) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- The Representation of the People Act 1983;
- Relevant guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC);
- The Council's adopted Standing Orders, in particular Standing Order 8 (Voting on Appointments) and Standing Orders relating to meetings, voting, confidentiality, and data protection.

1.3 Where a casual vacancy arises, the Proper Officer shall give public notice of the vacancy in accordance with Section 87(2) of the Local Government Act 1972.

1.4 If, after the expiry of 14 clear days following publication of the notice, no request for a by-election has been received by the Borough's Returning Officer from at least ten local government electors, the Council may fill the vacancy by co-option.

1.5 The next ordinary Parish elections will be in May 2027. If a vacancy occurs within 6 months of the Parish Council's forthcoming ordinary elections, then the election will not be held, however, the vacancy may be filled by co-option if wished, but the Council is not obliged to do so.

2. Equality and Transparency

2.1 Noak Bridge Parish Council is committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

2.2 The co-option process shall be conducted in a fair, open, and transparent manner, ensuring that all applicants are treated consistently and without discrimination.

3. Commencement of the Co-Option Process

3.1 Upon written confirmation from Electoral Services that no by-election has been requested and that the vacancy may be filled by co-option, the Proper Officer shall commence the co-option process.

3.2 The Proper Officer shall:

- Advertise the vacancy for a minimum of 14 clear days on the Council's notice boards, website, and by such other means as the Council considers appropriate;
- Notify all councillors that the co-option process has commenced;
- Send a copy of the published vacancy notice to the District Returning Officer and liaise with Electoral Services to confirm the date on which the 14-day period expires and the subsequent eligibility for co-option.

3.3 The 14-day notice period shall be calculated in accordance with electoral regulations and excludes Saturdays, Sundays, bank holidays, and national days of mourning.

4. Information for Prospective Applicants

4.1 Any person wishing to be considered for co-option shall contact the Proper Officer express an interest.

4.2 The Proper Officer shall provide prospective applicants with information regarding:

- Eligibility criteria for office;
- The role and responsibilities of a parish councillor, including adherence to the Code of Conduct;
- The requirement to complete an Acceptance of Office and Register of Interests if appointed.

4.3 The following documents shall be provided electronically where available:

- The Good Councillor Guide;
- Guidance on the role of parish councillors
- NALC's Local Council's Explained.

5. Application Process

5.1 Applicants wishing to proceed shall be required to submit:

- A completed Co-option Application Form (Appendix 1); and
- A completed Co-option Eligibility Form (Appendix 2).

5.2 Applications shall be submitted by the deadline specified in the vacancy advertisement.

5.3 All applications shall be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with the Council's data protection policies and the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

6. Consideration of Applications

6.1 All valid applications shall be circulated to councillors with the agenda for the meeting at which the co-option is to be considered.

6.2 Applicants shall be invited to attend the meeting to address the Council and to respond to questions from councillors.

6.3 Each applicant shall be given an equal opportunity to address the Council for up to **three minutes** and may answer questions put by councillors.

6.4 The Council shall assess applicants against the Councillor Person Specification set out in Appendix 3.

6.5 At the meeting, councillors may formally nominate and second applicants for election. Applicants who are not nominated and seconded shall not be put forward for a vote.

7. Decision and Voting

7.1 The decision to co-opt a councillor shall be made by resolution of the Council at a properly convened meeting.

7.2 Voting shall be conducted in accordance with Standing Order 8. Where more than two applicants are nominated and none receives an absolute majority, the applicant with the fewest votes shall be eliminated and a further vote taken until an absolute majority is achieved.

7.3 Each councillor shall have one vote per round of voting. Voting shall normally be by show of hands unless the Council resolves otherwise.

7.4 In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting shall exercise a casting vote.

8. Appointment

8.1 The Chair shall declare the successful applicant duly appointed.

8.2 The Proper Officer shall notify the successful applicant as soon as practicable and shall also notify unsuccessful applicants.

9. Post Appointment Formalities

9.1 The newly appointed councillor shall, before or at their first meeting, sign an Acceptance of Office. Upon doing so, they shall be entitled to act as a full member of the Council.

9.2 The Proper Officer shall notify Electoral Services of the appointment and shall ensure all statutory notices and website information are updated accordingly.

9.3 The councillor shall be provided with copies of the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and relevant committee terms of reference.

9.5 Within 28 days of appointment, the councillor must complete and submit a Register of Interests form to the Monitoring Officer, which will be published in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

9.6 The Council shall provide induction, training, and other support to assist the councillor in fulfilling their role effectively.

10. Review of Policy

10.1 This policy shall be reviewed periodically by the Council and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation or best practice. A full review will be conducted at least every years.

Appendix 1 – Co-option Application Form

Appendix 2 – Eligibility Requirements and Disqualifications

Eligibility to be a Parish Councillor

To be eligible for co-option as a councillor of Noak Bridge Parish Council, an applicant must, on the date of co-option:

1. Be at least 18 years of age; and
2. Be a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; and
3. Satisfy at least one of the following four qualifications:

Please indicate which apply (you may select more than one):

- ☐ a. I am registered as a local government elector for the parish of Noak Bridge; or
- ☐ b. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish of Noak Bridge; or
- ☐ c. My principal or only place of work during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option has been within the parish of Noak Bridge; or
- ☐ d. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, resided in the parish of Noak Bridge or within three miles of it.

Disqualifications

A person is disqualified from being elected or appointed as a parish councillor if they:

1. hold any paid office or employment of the Parish Council (other than the office of Chair);
2. are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order;
3. have, within five years before the date of co-option, been convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more without the option of a fine;
4. are otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

Appendix 3 – Councillor Person Specification

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Role: Parish Councillor

Parish councillors work together to set the strategic direction of the Council, make decisions on local issues, represent the interests of the community, and ensure that the Council acts lawfully and in the public interest. Councillors are expected to follow the Council's Code of Conduct and work constructively with fellow councillors, officers, partner organisations, and residents.

Essential Criteria

Commitment and Conduct

- A strong commitment to serving the local community and representing the interests of residents of Noak Bridge.
- Willingness to observe and uphold the Council's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.
- Commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in all council activities.
- A positive and constructive approach to problem-solving, addressing issues in a practical way.

Knowledge and Understanding

- An interest in local affairs and issues affecting the parish.
- An understanding of the role and responsibilities of a parish councillor, or a willingness to learn through training and guidance.

Skills and Abilities

- Ability to listen constructively and consider alternative viewpoints.
- Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully in meetings, with residents, and in public forums.
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team and to respect collective decision-making.
- Willingness and ability to engage with the local community and stakeholders to understand their views and represent their interests.
- Ability to form and maintain positive working relationships with councillors, officers, partner organisations, and the wider community.

Practical Requirements

- Ability and willingness to attend council meetings, committee meetings if appointed, and occasional local events.
- Willingness to undertake induction and ongoing training relevant to the role.

Desirable Criteria

Experience and Knowledge

- Experience of working or volunteering in a local authority, public body, voluntary organisation, or community group.
- Experience of representing the views of others or engaging with the public.
- A basic understanding of local government or parish council governance.

Additional Attributes

- Ability to bring particular skills, expertise, or local knowledge that would support the effective work of the Council (e.g., planning, finance, community engagement, communications).
- Familiarity with digital communication tools (email, council portals, online consultation platforms) and willingness to use them to support council work.

General Notes

- This role is unpaid. Expenses incurred in your duties will be considered by the Council
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to support councillors in carrying out their duties.
- The Council values a broad range of perspectives and encourages applications from individuals of all backgrounds and experiences to reflect the diversity of the community.