

Corringham Parish Council

COUNCIL MEMBER CO-OPTION POLICY

ADOPTED APRIL 2022

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Introduction

This policy sets out the means to ensure compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Corringham Parish Council and Burial Authority ('the Parish Council'). The Co-option procedure is entirely managed by the Parish Council and adherence to the application procedures (Appendices A and B) set out in this policy will ensure a fair and equitable co-option of members. The co-option policy will be reviewed every three years.

Whenever the need for co-option arises, the Parish Council will seek and encourage applications from those who meet the qualifying criteria (Appendix C) and are eligible to stand as a councillor.

Councillors can legally approach individuals to suggest they may wish to apply.

All vacancies will be advertised on the Parish Council noticeboard and/or website. 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. Co-Option

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

- A councillor fails to make their 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.

The Parish Council must notify West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) of a Casual Vacancy and advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten or more electors write to WLDC stating that an election is requested.

If a by-election is called, a polling station will be set up by WLDC and the electors will be asked to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of nomination paper. The Parish Council will pay the costs of the election. The electors have fourteen (14) days (not including

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weekends, bank holidays and other notable days) to claim the by-election; but the Electoral Officer will advise the Clerk of the closing date.

If more than one candidate is nominated, a by-election takes place; but if only one candidate is put forward, they are duly elected without a ballot.

If ten or more residents do not request a by- election within fourteen working days of the vacancy being posted, as advised by WLDC, Corringham Parish Council is able to co-opt a councillor.

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.

2. Confirmation of Co-Option

On receipt of written confirmation from WLDC 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.

Corringham 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. However, it is not desirable that electors in a particular Parish be left partially or full 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 to achieve meeting quorums without difficulty.

If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

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

3. Eligibility of Candidates

Corringham 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 their principal place of work in the parish; or
- has lived within three miles radius (direct) of the parish.

Expressions of interest rather than proper applications (see Appendices A and B) will not be considered.

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.
- Bankruptcy.
- 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.

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

Eligibility of the candidate(s) will be confirmed by the Clerk.

All eligible candidates shall be invited by letter to attend the next suitable and available full council meeting following the application deadline. This may not be the next full council meeting, however if the candidates are unable to attend, this meeting will not be rearranged.

4. Applications

Members may point out the vacancies and the process to any qualifying candidate(s).

Although there is no statutory requirement to do so, candidates will be requested to:

Submit information about themselves by way of completing a short application form (Appendix A).

Confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules (Appendix B).

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable full Council meeting will have an agenda item **‘To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to Co-opt a candidate to fill the existing vacancy/vacancies’**. Copies of the application(s) will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least three (3) clear days before the meeting of the full Council when the Co-option will be considered. Councillors will consider the application against the co-option criteria in Appendix C.

The Clerk and Councillors will treat all such documents as strictly confidential under the GDPR 2018.

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 the Council.

Candidates will also be informed that they may be invited to speak about their application at the meeting.

5. At the Co-Option Meeting

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

At the Co-option meeting, candidates will be given an allotted time to speak (typically five (5) minutes maximum) to introduce themselves to members, provide information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidate to speak. After the presentation, members may ask questions of the candidate for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

Where the Council wishes to discuss the merits and attributes of the candidates, the Council will resolve to exclude members of the press and public.

The voting process for proposed candidates will be carried out in the public session. A paper ballot may be held if more than half of the Council requests it. In this case, the ballot papers will be blank sheets of paper, and councillors will write either ‘For’ or ‘Against’. The Chair and Clerk will count the ballot papers and announce the results. For a candidate to be elected to the council, it will be necessary to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting).

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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.

If there are more than two candidates and no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting, the candidate with the least votes will drop out of the process. Further voting rounds will then occur with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting has a casting vote.

After the vote has been concluded, the Chair will declare the successful candidate(s) duly elected. After signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, the candidate(s) may take their seat immediately.

6. Elected Councillors (Co-Option)

Successfully co-opted candidates become Councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member.

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

Any application can be considered in a candidate(s) absence, but if successful, their signed Declaration of Acceptance of Office must be submitted at the next Council Meeting.

The Clerk will notify Electoral Services of the new appointment. The successful candidate(s) must complete their 'Registration of Interests' within 28 days of being elected. The form should be handed to the Clerk for forwarding to the Monitoring Officer.

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Appendix A - Application for Co-option

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Parish Councillor. Please provide the below information to assist Corringham Parish Council in making their decision. Please complete Appendix A & B and email them to clerkcorringhampc@gmail.com or hand them to the Clerk for processing.

Full Name & Title	
Home Address	
Home Telephone	
Mobile Telephone	
Email Address	
<p>1. Please tell us about the <i>experience</i> you feel you could bring to Corringham Parish Council for the benefit of its residents., e.g., previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business, trade union experience, etc.</p>	

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2. Please tell us about the *skills* you feel you could offer to Corringham Parish Council for the benefit of its operation and residents, e.g., professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise, etc.

3. Briefly tell us why you are interested in becoming a Parish Councillor and any other information you would like to add in support of your application.

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4. Are there any questions you would like to ask the Parish Council prior to the meeting for co-option?

Signed: Print:

Date:

Appendix B – Co-Option Eligibility Form

	Please tick to indicate all that apply to you:	TICK BOX
a.	A British subject, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union	
b.	On the 'relevant date' (i.e., the day on which you are nominated or if there is a poll the day of the election) you are 18 years of age or over	
c.	I am registered as a local government elector for the Parish; or	
d.	I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option occupied as owner or tenant land or other premises in the Parish; or	
e.	My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been within the Parish; or;	
f.	I have during the whole twelve months resided in the Parish or within 3 miles of it.	

Under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if specific criteria are not met:

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		YES / NO
a.	Are you an employee of Corringham Parish Council?	
b.	<p>Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?</p> <p>Note: This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:</p> <p>i. If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that their debts have been fully discharged;</p> <p>ii. If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on their part;</p> <p>iii. If the person is discharged without such a certificate.</p> <p>In i and ii above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge, respectively.</p> <p>In iii, it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge.</p>	
c.	Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, Channel Islands or 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?	
d.	Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	

Declaration of Consent

I.....hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Corringham Parish Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed: Print:

Date:

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Appendix C – Co-Option Criteria

Competency	Essential	Desirable
Personal Attributes	Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community. Forward thinking and solution orientated outlook and approach.	Can bring a new skill, expertise, or key local knowledge to the Parish Council.
Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability	Solid interest in local matters.	Experience of working in the public body sector or not for profit organisation.
	Ability to actively listen and engage.	Experience of working with voluntary and/or local community/interest groups.
	Ability to initiate, plan, action and complete a variety of projects.	Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish councils or local authorities.
	Ability and desire to represent the Parish Council and the community it serves. Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and maintain good working relationships with all members, staff and residents.	Experience in preparing or delivering presentations and/or public speaking to a range of stakeholders.
	Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute objective and valid opinions at meetings. Ability to listen to and respect the views and opinions of others and accept majority decisions.	
	Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly to a range of stakeholders.	
	Experience in using IT e.g., e-mail, internet access, word processing.	Ability to accurately proof-read and review electronic and paper documents and policies.
Circumstances	Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Parish Council (or arrangements of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events as may be necessary for the evening and at weekends.	