

# Garsdale Parish Council

## Co-option Procedure

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The co-option of a Parish Councillor occurs when a casual vacancy has arisen on the Council and no poll (by- election) has been called.

### 2 PROCEDURE

To ensure that a fair and transparent process is undertaken, the following procedure will be followed by Garsdale Parish Council.

1. On receipt of written confirmation from Westmorland & Furness Council that the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option, the Parish Clerk will:
  - a. advertise the vacancy for at least 2 weeks on the Council notice boards and website;
  - b. advise the Council that the co-option procedure has been instigated by sending an email to all Councillors (if required).
2. Applicants for co-option will be asked to complete an application/eligibility form (obtainable from the Clerk). Carrying out an eligibility check is a requirement according to regulations.
3. Copies of the applicant's application/eligibility form will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least three clear days prior to the meeting of the Council at which the co- option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Councillors as strictly private and confidential.
4. The application documents from successful candidates will be retained until they cease to be a Co- opted Member of the Council. The written statement and application documents from unsuccessful candidates will be destroyed when all successful candidates have signed their Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
5. The application(s) will be considered at the next available Parish Council meeting. The press and public will be asked to leave the Council meeting whilst the application(s) is(are) considered, since applications are treated as confidential.
6. The council may co-opt anyone it believes will be suitable to fill the vacancy, provided the person is qualified to be a councillor. The council is not obliged to co-opt any person they consider to be unsuitable, even if he/she is the only person who has applied for co-option
7. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, a single composite motion can be used to fill more than one vacancy. If the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies, then a vote (or series of votes) must be conducted in accordance with paragraph 7.
8. Voting will be in accordance with the statutory requirements in that a successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting. If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority over the aggregate votes given to the rest, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated from the process.

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The remainder must be put to the vote again and this process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained. If two candidates poll the same number of votes, a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies. Councillors shall vote by a show of hands. If any member so requires, the Clerk shall record the names of members who voted to show whether they voted for, against, or abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the chairman of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

9. For each vacancy, each Councillor has one vote i.e. two vacancies will enable two votes.
10. After the vote has been conducted, this business is concluded when the chairman of the meeting declares that the successful candidate(s) is (are) duly elected. The successful candidate(s) is (are) then declared co-opted to the Council.
11. The successful candidate will be notified as soon as practicable and asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office. This must be completed before they can take their seat on the council.
12. The Clerk will advise the Monitoring Officer of Westmorland & Furness Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.
13. The Parish Clerk will provide each new Councillor with the relevant Code of Conduct and links to the Parish Council website and Cumbria Association of Local Council website.
14. It is the responsibility of any new member to read and to have understood the Council's Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations prior to attendance at their first meeting.
15. It is recommended that all councillors undertake training. Suggested training is (but not limited to): effective councillor & code of conduct. This enables the new councillor to represent the parish effectively.

*Adopted by Garsdale Parish Council on 12 Mach 2025*

*Review: As required*