

**CUDDSDON AND DENTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**CO-OPTION PROCEDURE**

**August 2023**

**CO-OPTION**

- 1 A casual vacancy arises when a councillor resigns from the Parish Council or leaves for some other reason. In this event, the co-option procedure will apply once SODC's Returning Officer has informed the Parish Council that an election has not been called by ten valid requests being received within 14 working days of the casual vacancy being declared.
- 2 In the event of a Parish Council election, the co-option procedure will apply if there are insufficient nominated persons to provide a full Council.
- 3 The Parish Council will agree the timetable for the co-option procedure.
- 4 The Parish Council shall aim to fill any vacancies by co-option as soon as practical.
- 5 When co-option is necessary, notices will be placed on the parish council notice board, on the village website and in the Newsletter inviting candidates wishing to be co-opted to apply for the vacancies.

**THE CANDIDATES**

- 6 Written communication between the Parish Clerk and candidates will normally be by email.
- 7 Each candidate must apply in writing to the Clerk at least five working days before the date of the meeting when the co-option procedure is taking place.
- 8 A candidate may withdraw their candidacy in writing to the Parish Clerk up to two working days before the meeting when the co-option procedure is taking place.
- 9 Each candidate is also expected to provide a synopsis of themselves which is no more than one page long. The synopsis is expected to give information on the candidate's background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council.
- 10 A list of candidates and their synopses will be supplied to the parish councillors before the meeting.
- 11 All synopses will be treated by the Clerk and all parish councillors as strictly private and confidential.
- 12 All candidates will be told the date and time of the meeting when the co-option is being decided.
- 13 Each candidate will be supplied with a copy of this co-option procedure document.
- 14 Each candidate will be supplied with a complete list of candidates.

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- 15 The Parish Council is not obliged to fill a vacant position from candidates on the list and may defer filling a position to a later date.
- 16 The parish council meeting where the co-option procedure takes place must be quorate, with at least three councillors present and voting.
- 17 The co-option will be included as an item on the meeting's agenda.
- 18 It is of paramount importance that all applicants are treated alike so that arrangements are seen to be open, fair and transparent.
- 19 If a councillor is a relative of a candidate or has any connection with a candidate which may be perceived as prejudicial, that councillor must declare an interest and not take part in the co-option procedure. If the meeting is then no longer quorate, then the co-option procedure will not take place.
- 20 If there are the same number or fewer candidates than vacancies, then the Parish Council may decide that all candidates are co-opted without voting.
- 21 The Parish Council's voting on the co-option must be carried out while the public are present.
- 22 It follows that the candidates, as members of the public, are entitled to be present during the proceedings.
- 23 At its discretion, the Parish Council may or may not ask candidates to speak at the meeting.
- 24 If the Parish Council wishes to discuss the merits of candidates and their personal attributes prior to the vote, then it may decide to exclude members of the public from that part of the meeting.

## **THE VOTE**

- 25 The Parish Council may decide to carry out the vote by a show of hands or by a secret ballot.
- 26 A successful candidate must receive an absolute majority vote (more than 50%) of those present and voting.
- 27 In general, if there is a single vacancy then each councillor has one vote.
- 28 If there are more than two candidates for one vacancy and no one of them at the first count receives a majority of votes, then steps must be taken to strike off the candidate with the least number of votes and the remainder must then be put to the vote again.
- 29 This process must, if necessary, be repeated until an absolute majority is obtained.
- 30 It may be impractical to select a successful candidate by the above procedure, for example because there are only a small number of councillors voting, because of the

large number of candidates standing or because of the large number of vacancies. In this case the Parish Council may decide that each councillor will have a multiple number of votes at each stage. So, for example, if there are three vacancies to be filled then each councillor may be given three votes.

- 31 At each stage in the process the Parish Council must be sure that the procedure is not disadvantageous or advantageous to any candidate.
- 32 In the event of a tied vote, the Chairman has a casting vote. Where applicable, such a vote shall be deemed to fulfil the requirement for an absolute majority vote.
- 33 The ballots will be counted by the Clerk.
- 34 If ballot papers are used then they shall be destroyed by the Clerk following the co-option.
- 35 If insufficient candidates are co-opted, the process may be repeated, with vacancies being advertised again. Alternatively, if considered appropriate, the Parish Council may invite members of the community to fill the vacancies.
- 36 All candidates will be told the result of the co-option process in writing.