



# Whatlington Parish Council

## CO-OPTION POLICY

### 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to ensure that there is compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members to Whatlington Parish Council. The Co-option procedure is entirely managed by Whatlington Parish Council and this policy will ensure that a fair and equitable process is carried out.

### 2. Co-option

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. A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make his 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) months to attend meetings of a council committee or subcommittee or to attend as a representative of the council a meeting of an outside body.

Whatlington Parish Council has to notify the District Council of a Casual Vacancy and then advertise the vacancy and give electors the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten electors notify the District Council stating that an election is requested.

If a by-election is called, a polling station will be set up by the District Council and the electors will be asked to vote for candidates who will have put themselves forward by way of nomination paper. Whatlington Parish Council will pay the costs of the election. The electors have fourteen days (not including 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 then nominated a by-election takes place but if only one candidate is put forward, they are duly elected without a ballot.

If ten residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, as advertised by the District Council, Whatlington Parish Council is able to co-opt a volunteer.

### 3. Confirmation of Co-option

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office of the District Council the casual vacancy can be filled by means of Co-option. The parish clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks on the council notice boards and website;
- Advise Whatlington Parish Council that the Co-option Policy has been instigated.

Whatlington Parish Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the council invites applications for co-option it is not obliged to select anyone from the candidates that apply.

However, despite this it is not desirable that electors be left underrepresented for a significant length of time, neither does it contribute to effective and efficient working of the 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.

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

#### 4. Eligibility of Candidates

Whatlington Parish Council is able to consider any person to fill a vacancy provided that:

- He/she is an elector of the parish; or
- has resided in the parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land or other premises in the parish; or
- had his/her principal place of work in the parish; or
- has lived within three miles (direct) of the parish.

There are certain disqualifications for election, of which the main are:

- Holding a paid office 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 practices.

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

#### 5. 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) which includes the requirement to confirm their eligibility for the position of Councillor within the statutory rules

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable 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'. Copies of the application will be circulated to all Councillors by the Clerk at least three clear days before the meeting of the full Council when the Co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated as strictly confidential by the Clerk and Councillors.

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

#### 6. At the Co-option Meeting

At the Co-option meeting candidates will be given five minutes maximum to introduce themselves to members, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of Whatlington Parish Council. The process will be carried out by adjourning the meeting to allow the candidate to speak. Where the Council wishes to discuss the merits of candidates and inevitable their personal attributes the Council will resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.

As soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions the Council will proceed to vote on the acceptability of each candidate utilising the Person Specification criteria as set out in Appendix B and any personal statements provided by the candidate(s), with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the Councillors in attendance and a vote by show of hands. The vote will be recorded.

In order for a candidate to be elected to Whatlington Parish Council it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has 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 Chairman will declare the successful candidate duly elected and, after signing their Declaration of Acceptance of Office, he/she make take their seat immediately.

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.

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

Policy adopted on	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
Minute reference	15.01.2026 item 8
Policy next review date	January 2029

APPENDIX A

**Application for the Role of Councillor for Whatlington Parish Council**

Full name	
Home address Inc. Postcode	
Telephone number	
Mobile number	
Email	

Legal qualifications for being a parish councillor.

**(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to both of the questions below)**

Are you a Commonwealth citizen (which includes a British subject), or a citizen of a member state of the European Union.	Yes/No.
Are you 18 or over?	Yes/No.

**(To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to at least one of the questions below)**

Are you on the electoral register for the parish of Whatlington?	Yes/No
Have you lived either in the Parish of Whatlington or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	Yes/No
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the Parish of Whatlington for at least a year?	Yes/No
Have you had your only or main place of work in the Parish of Whatlington for at least a year?	Yes/No.

**DISQUALIFICATIONS**

**(You must be able to answer No to all of the questions below to be eligible to serve as a councillor)**

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	Yes/No.
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the 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?	Yes/No.
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	Yes/No.

Please briefly outline why you are interested in being a parish councillor.

Please tell us something about the life experience you will bring to the Council, for example, previous local government experience, work in the voluntary or charitable sector, business or trade union experience.

Please tell us something about the skills you feel you will bring to the Council, for example, professional qualifications, financial or project management expertise.

Are there any questions you would like to ask the council?

**DECLARATION**

I..... herby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Whatlington Parish Councillor; and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signature.....

Date.....

**APPENDIX B**

**CO-OPTED COUNCILLOR PERSON SPECIFICATION**

<b>COMPETENCY</b>	<b>ESSENTIAL</b>	<b>DESIRABLE</b>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<p>Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community</p> <p>Forward thinking</p>	<p>Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council</p>
<b>Experience, Skills, Knowledge and Ability</b>	<p>Ability to listen constructively</p> <p>A good team player</p> <p>Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects</p> <p>Solid interest in local matters</p> <p>Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community</p> <p>Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see others views and accept majority decisions</p> <p>Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly</p> <p>Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and to maintain good working relationships with all members and staff</p> <p>Ability and willingness to work with Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other parish Councils, principal authority, charities)</p> <p>Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training</p>	<p>Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body</p> <p>Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/interest groups</p> <p>Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish Councils or local authorities</p> <p>Experience of delivering presentations</p>
<b>Circumstances</b>	<p>Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends</p>	