

## Co-option Policy and Procedure

### 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure the Parish Council will follow when filling a councillor vacancy by co-option, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and NALC guidance. The aim is to ensure a fair, open, and transparent process.

### 2. When Co-option May Be Used

Co-option may be used when:

- A casual vacancy arises and the Returning Officer confirms that no election has been requested by ten electors within the statutory 14 working days; or
- A vacancy exists following an ordinary election due to insufficient nominations.

The Council must not co-opt until formal confirmation has been received from the Returning Officer.

### 3. Public Notice of Co-option

Once co-option is permitted, the Clerk will publish a **Co-option Notice** inviting written applications from eligible residents. The notice will:

- State the number of vacancies
- Provide the eligibility criteria
- Give the closing date for applications
- Explain how to apply

The notice will be displayed on parish noticeboards, the Council website, and other communication channels as appropriate.

### 4. Applications

Applicants must submit a written expression of interest including:

- Full name and address
- Confirmation of eligibility to stand as a councillor
- Brief statement explaining why they wish to serve
- Skills, experience, or interests relevant to the role

The Clerk will acknowledge all applications and circulate them to councillors prior to the meeting at which the co-option will be considered – please see attached form.

### 5. Consideration of Candidates at a Council Meeting

Co-option will take place at a properly convened meeting of the Parish Council.

The procedure will be:

1. The Chair will introduce the item.
2. Each candidate (if present) may speak for up to **three minutes**.
3. Councillors may ask **factual questions** for clarification.
4. Candidates will then withdraw from the room while councillors debate and vote.

The meeting will remain open to the public throughout.

## 6. Voting Method

- All voting for co-option must be done by **written ballot**.
- Each Councillor at the meeting will be provided with a ballot slip listing the eligible candidates.
- Councillors must mark their preferred candidate on the ballot slip and return it to the Clerk.

### Ballot Management

- The Clerk will act as **Returning Officer** for the purposes of the ballot.
- The Clerk will ensure that all Ballot Slips are completed and count the votes.
- Ballot slips will be retained by the clerk for the period required under the Council's document retention policy.

### Determining the Outcome

- A candidate must receive an **absolute majority** of votes cast to be co-opted.
- If no candidate receives a majority on the first ballot:
  - The candidate with the lowest number of votes will be removed from the ballot.
  - Further rounds of voting will take place until one candidate receives a majority.
- In the event of a tie between the two final candidates, the Chair will have a **casting vote**, in accordance with legislation.

### Transparency

- The Chair will announce the result of the written ballot at the meeting.
- The number of votes for each candidate will be recorded in the minutes, but **individual voting choices will remain confidential**.

## 7. Appointment

Once a candidate has received an absolute majority:

- The Council will resolve to co-opt the candidate.
- The successful candidate will sign the **Declaration of Acceptance of Office** before taking their seat.
- The Clerk will provide the Code of Conduct and Register of Interests form.
- The Register of Interests must be completed and returned within **28 days**.

Unsuccessful candidates will be thanked for their interest.

## 8. Confidentiality and Data Handling

Eligibility forms and personal data will be handled in accordance with GDPR.

Forms for unsuccessful candidates will be destroyed as confidential waste.

## 9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if legislation or best practice changes.

### Policy Adopted:

## Guidelines for Councillors When Considering Co-option Candidates

Competency	Essential	Desirable
<b>Knowledge, Education &amp; Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A genuine interest in local issues and the wellbeing of the community</li> <li>• Understanding of the role of a parish councillor and willingness to learn</li> <li>• Awareness of the Council's responsibilities and the Code of Conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in community organisations, voluntary groups, or public service</li> <li>• Knowledge of local government or parish council functions</li> </ul>
<b>Experience, Skills &amp; Personal Qualities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate clearly and respectfully</li> <li>• Willingness to work collaboratively with councillors, staff, and partners</li> <li>• Good listening skills and an open, fair approach to decision-making</li> <li>• Ability to read and consider reports and make informed judgements</li> <li>• Commitment to attending meetings and preparing for them</li> <li>• Willingness to undertake training and development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of committee work, governance, or strategic decision-making</li> <li>• Experience of working with budgets or financial information</li> <li>• Confidence speaking in public or presenting information</li> <li>• Experience of partnership working (e.g., with councils, charities, community groups)</li> </ul>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for different views and ability to represent the whole community</li> <li>• Willingness to engage with residents appropriately and constructively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience organising community events or initiatives</li> <li>• Established links with local groups or networks</li> </ul>
<b>Conduct &amp; Commitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to abide by the Code of Conduct and uphold high standards of behaviour</li> <li>• Reliability, integrity, and respect for confidentiality</li> <li>• Commitment to the principles of public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated leadership in community or professional settings</li> </ul>
<b>Practical Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to attend evening meetings and occasional events</li> <li>• Access to email and willingness to use digital communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good IT skills (email, documents, online meetings)</li> </ul>

# Shepherdswell with Coldred Parish Council

## Co-option Application Form

### 1. Personal Details

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### 2. Eligibility to Serve as a Parish Councillor

To be eligible for co-option, you must meet *at least one* of the following criteria and **not** be disqualified under relevant legislation.

Please tick all that apply:

- I am registered as a local government elector for the parish.
- I have lived in the parish, or within 3 miles of it, for the past 12 months.
- I occupy as owner or tenant land or premises in the parish for the past 12 months.
- My principal or only place of work has been in the parish for the past 12 months.

**Please confirm you are not disqualified from holding office:**

- I confirm I am not disqualified under the Local Government Act 1972 or other relevant legislation.

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### **3. About You**

**Why would you like to become a parish councillor?**

*(Please outline your motivation and what you hope to contribute.)*

**What skills, experience, or interests would you bring to the council?**

*(Community involvement, professional background, local knowledge, etc.)*

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### **4. Declarations**

**Are you willing to attend council meetings regularly and undertake training as required?**

- Yes
- No

**Are you willing for your name to be published as an applicant?**

- Yes
- No

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### **5. Signature**

I declare that the information given in this application is true and complete.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_