Winsley Parish Council

Vacancy and Co-option Policy

1. Vacancies arising

1.1 When a parish councillor vacancy arises between local elections, the Clerk will notify the Election Services team at Wiltshire Council.

1.2 The Election Services team will provide a Notice of Vacancy which must be displayed on a Parish Council noticeboard for 14 working days. During this time ten electors may request an election by notifying the Returning Officer at Wiltshire Council.

1.3 After 14 days, the Clerk will be notified of the outcome. If no election has been requested then the Parish Council must seek to co-opt to fill the vacancy, unless it is within six months of forthcoming local elections. In this case the Parish Council may decide to fill the vacancy by co-option, but it is not obliged to do so. The next local elections are due to take place in May 2029.

1.4 Insufficiency of candidates at local elections also provides the Parish Council with the authority to co-opt to any vacancies. In this situation a Notice of Vacancy is not required.

2. Advertising of vacancies and making an application

2.1 Parish councillor vacancies will be advertised on the noticeboards, the Parish Council website and via the Parish Council Facebook page.

2.2 Whenever the need for co-option arises, Winsley Parish Council will seek and encourage applications from anyone who is eligible to stand as a Winsley Parish councillor. Councillors and parishioners can approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option.

2.3 Anyone who is interested in the role is welcome to talk to the Clerk or a Councillor for further information. The Clerk can send on introductory information about parish councils and how Winsley Parish Council operates.

2.4 Anyone wishing to be considered for co-option should submit a short statement about themselves in which they can provide information about their skills, experience and interest in local matters and the Parish Council. They will also be asked to confirm that they meet the eligibility criteria to be a councillor (see Appendix).

2.5 A deadline for applications will be set, usually three days ahead of the next Parish Council meeting.

3. Consideration of applications

3.1 All applications will be circulated to councillors ahead of the Parish Council meeting at which they will be considered.

3.2 Applicants will be invited to attend the meeting at which applications will be considered, but they do not have to be in attendance to be considered for co-option. If applicants are unable to attend, the meeting will not be rearranged.

3.3 At the meeting, applicants are welcome to introduce themselves during Public Participation, speaking for up to three minutes.

3.4 Councillors will consider all applications under the relevant agenda item.

4. Voting

4.1 Having considered the applicants' statements and listened to any applicants who wished to speak during Public Participation, councillors will vote on who to co-opt. As per Standing Orders, "*By resolution, the Council may decide to hold the vote for a co-option via written ballot. Councillors will write down the name of the person they are voting for. The Clerk will count the votes and the Chair will verify the count and announce the outcome.*"

4.2 Voting will be according to statutory requirements, in that, a successful applicant must have received an absolute majority vote to be declared co-opted.

4.3 If none of the applicants receives an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the Chair of the meeting.

5. Acceptance of Office

5.1 Once elected, the co-opted councillor must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office. They will then be invited to join the Parish Council meeting.

5.2 Within 28 days of signing the Declaration of Office the councillor must complete the Register of Interests. The Clerk will provide details of how to logon to complete the online Register.

Appendix: Parish Councillor Eligibility and Disqualification Criteria

The Eligibility Criteria

An applicant must satisfy one or more of the following:

- He/She must be registered as a local government elector for the relevant Parish/Parish Ward in respect of a qualifying address.
- He/She must have occupied as an owner or tenant land or other premises in the relevant Parish/Parish Ward for the last 12 months.
- He/She must have worked, as principal or only place of work during the last 12 months, within the Parish/Parish Ward boundary.
- He/She must reside within the boundary of the relevant Parish/Parish Ward or no further than 4.8 km from it.

The Disqualification Criteria

A person is disqualified from being a Parish Councillor if one, or more, of the following apply:

- Bankruptcy (or within 5 years of discharge).
- Compositions and Arrangements with Creditors (or within 5 years of fulfilment of the deed).
- By Order of a Court.
- Convicted of any offence and has been sentenced to not less than 3 months imprisonment without the option of a fine.