

# **Old Weston Parish Council**

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## **Co-option Policy**

Version Number: 02

Policy Author: Lisa Hazel

Committee: Council

Policy Approved Date: May 2025

Policy Review Date: May 2028

## **1. Background**

This policy sets out the procedure required to ensure compliance with legislation and continuity of procedures in the co-option of members of Old Weston Parish Council. The co-option procedure is managed by the Parish Council, and this policy will ensure a fair and equitable process is carried out.

## **2. Co-option**

The co-option of a parish councillor occurs in two instances:

- When an ordinary vacancy arises on the Parish Council after the ordinary elections held every four years;
- When a casual vacancy arises on the Parish Council and no poll (by election) has been called.

## **3. Ordinary Vacancy**

An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on the Parish Council at the scheduled elections held every four years. Any candidates who were validly nominated are elected un-opposed to the Parish Council and any remaining vacancies are known as “ordinary vacancies”. Provided there are enough Parish Councillors to constitute a quorum, the Parish Council is usually able to co-opt individuals to fill the remaining vacancies from the scheduled elections at any point over the four-year term without the requirement to publish a Notice of Vacancy. For other casual vacancies that occur throughout the four-year term, the Parish Council is required to publish a Notice of Vacancy and notify by providing a copy to Huntingdonshire District Council of the publication. The District Council will advise after 14 working days as to whether the Parish Council may proceed to co-option or a request has been received to hold a by-election.

## **4. Casual Vacancy**

A casual vacancy occurs when:

- A councillor fails to make their declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time;
- A councillor resigns;
- A councillor dies;
- A councillor becomes disqualified; or

- A councillor fails to attend for a period of six months, meetings of a council, committee, or sub-committee or to attend as a representative of the council a meeting of an outside body.

Old Weston Parish Council must notify Huntingdonshire District Council as and when a casual vacancy arises and then proceed to advertise the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. An election will be called if ten or more electors write to Huntingdonshire District Council requesting an election be called. If more than one candidate is then nominated a by-election will take place. If ten electors do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, the Parish Council is able to fill the vacancy by co-option.

## **5. Confirmation of Co-option**

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been called, the casual vacancy can be filled by means of co-option. The Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four week or such other period as the Parish Council may agree on the Parish Council notice boards and website.
- Advise Huntingdonshire District Council that the co-option policy had been instigated

This procedure will also apply in the case of an ordinary vacancy where the Electoral Service Office had confirmed that there were insufficient nominations to fill all the seats but there are sufficient parish councillors elected to constitute a quorum.

## **6. Eligibility of Candidates**

To qualify to be a Parish Councillor, a person must on the day of the co-option be a British and/or Commonwealth subject or citizen and attained the age of 18. And:

- on that day is and thereafter continues to be a local government elector for the area of the Authority; and/or
- has during the whole 12 months preceding that day occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the area; and/or
- their principle or only place of working during the 12 months had been in the area; and/or

- during the whole 12 months has resided in the area; and/or
- during the whole 12 months has resided in the Parish or within 4.8km (3 miles) of it.

A person is disqualified from being a Parish Councillor if within five years before their election or since election:

- they have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of three months or more
- has been adjudged a bankrupt
- is an employee of the Parish Council
- is disqualified under legislation

## **7. Applications**

Any person wishing to be considered for co-option to Old Weston Parish Council will be asked to complete a short application form and confirm their eligibility for the position of Parish Councillor within the statutory rules.

On receipt of applications, the next suitable Full Council Meeting will have an agenda item 'To receive written applications for the office of Parish Councillor and to co-opt to fill the existing vacancy/ies)

Copies of the eligible candidates' applications will be circulated to the members of Old Weston Parish Council by the Clerk prior to the Full Parish Council meeting, when co-option will be considered.

All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all Parish Councillors as strictly private and confidential.

## **8. At the Co-Option meeting**

At the co-option meeting candidates will be given three minutes to introduce themselves to the Parish Councillors, give information on their background and experience and explain why they wish to become a member of the Parish Council. This will be carried out in the open forum and there will be no private discussions between members prior to the vote being taken. However, where the Parish Council is discussing the merits of candidates and inevitably personal attributes, this could be prejudicial, and the Parish Council should resolve to exclude the members of the press and public.

The Parish Council will proceed to vote with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the Councillors in attendance and to vote by a show of hands. A recorded vote may be requested under Standing Orders, to show whether each Councillor present gave their vote for or against that question.

In order for a candidate to be co-opted to the 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 an absolute majority.

A co-opted candidate will sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, including an undertaking to abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, either before or at the next meeting of the Parish Council.

The Clerk will notify Huntingdonshire District Council Electoral Services Office of the co-option of the new Parish Councillor.

The co-opted Parish Councillor will complete a Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interest form, which the Clerk will send to the Monitoring Office at Huntingdonshire District Council within 28 days of the co-option.

If insufficient candidates are co-opted, the process should continue, whereby the vacancies are again advertised.

## **9. Approval**

This policy was approved at the Parish Council meeting of May 2025 and adopted with immediate effect.

## **10. Review**

This policy should be reviewed in May 2028 and triennially thereafter and reviewed at any time when the Parish Council are made aware of any changes to legislation or Central and Local Government policies that could have a material influence on this policy.

**End of Policy**

## **Appendix A**

### **Old Weston Parish Council Co-Option Application Form**

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Are you 18 or over? Yes / No

**Please detail any experience you may have that is relevant to Old Weston Parish Council (if necessary, continue onto a separate sheet) Max 500 words.**

**Is there any other information you would like to disclose regarding your application?**

### **Use of Personal Information**

Old Weston Parish Council will use your information, including that which you provide on this application form, to assess your suitability to be a Parish Councillor.

### **Declaration & Consent**

I have read the section entitled "Use of Personal Information" and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included on this application form.

I declare the information given on this form to be true and correct.

Signed .....

Name .....

Date .....

Please complete and return this form together with the completed Co-option Eligibility form to:

The Clerk, Old Weston Parish Council, c/o 2 Brampton Road, Grafham, PE28 0UR

Tel: 07867 766445

Email: [clerk@oldwestonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@oldwestonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## Appendix B

### Old Weston Parish Council Co-option Eligibility Form

**1. In order to be eligible for co-option as an Old Weston Parish Councillor you must satisfy certain criteria. You must satisfy (a) and (b) and at least one of the options (c) – (f). Please tick which apply to you:**

- a. I am 18 years of age or over; and
- b. I am a British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union; and
- c. I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
- d. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of the co-option occupied, as an owner or tenant, land or premises in the parish; or
- e. My principal or only place of work during those twelve months has been in the parish; or
- f. I have during the whole of those twelve months resided in the parish or within 4.8km (3 miles) of it.

**2. Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is disqualified from being a parish councillor if they:**

- are employed by the parish council
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim bankruptcy restrictions order or a debt relief restrictions order or an interim debt relief restrictions order; or
- have within five years before the day of co-option, or since their co-option, been convicted in the UK, Channel Island or Isle of Man of an offence and have been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine;
- Are otherwise disqualified under legislation

#### Use of Personal Information

Old Weston Parish Council will use your information, including that which you provide on this application form, to assess your suitability to be a Parish Councillor.

#### Declaration & Consent

I, ..... hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Old Weston Parish Councillor and I am not disqualified under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 from being a Parish Councillor and that the information given on this form is true and correct.

I have read the section entitled “Use of Personal Information” and by signing this form I consent to the use and disclosure of my information included in this form.

Signature ..... Name .....

Date.....