



Councillor vacancy and co-option policy

INTRODUCTION

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

ORDINARY VACANCY

An ordinary vacancy occurs when there are insufficient candidates to fill all the seats on the Parish Council at the ordinary elections held every four years. Any candidates who were nominated are automatically elected 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 a volunteer to fill the vacancies. In some cases, the District Council (North Somerset) may intervene and make an appointment or order an election to fill the vacancies.

CASUAL VACANCY

A casual vacancy occurs when a councillor:

- fails to make his declaration of acceptance of office at the proper time
- resigns
- dies
- becomes disqualified or
- fails for six months to attend meetings of a council committee or sub-committee or to attend as a representative of the council a meeting of an outside body

The Parish Council is required to notify the North Somerset District Council of a casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy giving electors for the Parish the opportunity to request an election. This occurs when ten electors write to Electoral Services Office of North Somerset Council requesting an election.

If a by-election is called, a polling station will be set up by North Somerset Council and Parishioners will be asked to vote for candidates who have put themselves forward by way of a nomination paper. The Parish Council will pay for the costs of the election.

Parishioners have fourteen working days (not including weekends, bank holidays and national days of mourning), to claim the by-election, but the Electoral Services Office of North Somerset District Council 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 advised by the Electoral Services Office, Locking Parish Council is able to co-opt a volunteer.

CO-OPTION

The co-option of a Locking Parish Councillor occurs in two instances, when:

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

CONFIRMATION OF CO-OPTION

On receipt of written confirmation from the Electoral Services Office that no by-election has been claimed, the parish council must co-opt to fill the casual vacancy, unless it is within six months of the forthcoming parish council's ordinary elections, in which case the council is not obliged to do so.

The Clerk will:

- Advertise the vacancy for four weeks or such other period as the Parish Council may agree on the Parish Council notice boards and website
- Advise North Somerset District Council that the agreed policy for co-option has been instigated

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

ELIGIBILITY OF CANDIDATES

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

- he/she is 18 or over; and
- he/she is a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union;

and at least one of the following apply:

- he/she is an elector for the Parish and continues to be an elector; or
- has resided in the Parish for the past twelve months or rented/tenanted land in the Parish; or
- has had his/her principal or only place of work in the Parish for the past twelve months; or
- has lived within three miles of the Parish for the past twelve months.
- There are certain disqualifications for being a parish councillor, of which the main are (*see Local Government Act 1972, section 80*):
- holding a paid office or employment under the Parish Council;
- 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 preceding five years; or
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices.

APPLICATIONS

Candidates will be requested to:

- Attend at least one Parish Council meeting and two Committee meetings as observers;
- Submit information about themselves, by way of completing a short application form (*a copy of the application form is attached as Appendix A*)
- Confirm their eligibility for the position of parish councillor within the statutory rules (*a copy of the eligibility form is attached as Appendix B*)

Following receipt of applications, the next suitable Parish 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'. Eligible candidates will be invited to attend the meeting.

Copies of the eligible candidates' applications will be circulated to all parish councillors by the Clerk at least three clear days prior to the meeting of the full Parish Council, when the co-option will be considered. All such documents will be treated by the Clerk and all parish councillors as strictly private and confidential.

AT THE CO-OPTION MEETING

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

When all candidates have finished their submissions, Locking Parish Council will proceed to a vote with each candidate being proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance and a vote by a show of hands (LGA 1972 Sch 12, Para 13 (1)). (Standing Order 3 s)

A recorded vote may be requested to show whether each councillor present and voting, gave his/her vote for or against that question. (LGA 1972 Sch 12, Para 13 (2)). (Standing Order 3 s)

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 tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting. (Standing Order 8)

A co-opted candidate will sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, including an undertaking to abide by the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, at the co-option meeting and may take office thereafter. The Clerk will notify North Somerset District Council Electoral Services Office of the co-option of the new parish councillor.

The co-opted parish councillor will complete a Register of Members Interests form which the Clerk will lodge with the Monitoring Officer at North Somerset 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.

Adopted: 5 March 2026

Minute reference: 158) a)



Locking Parish Council

☎ 01934 820786

✉ clerk@lockingparishcouncil.gov.uk

📍 The Parish Hall, Grenville Avenue,
Locking, North Somerset BS24 8AR

Co-option Application Form

Full name	
Home address	
Postcode	
Telephone number	
Mobile telephone number	
Email	

We ask that before you submit your application that you attend 3 meetings of the Parish Council preferably 2 Full Council meeting and 1 Committee meeting.

PLEASE ANSWER THE YES/NO QUESTIONS CAREFULLY AS THEY SETOUT THE LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING A PARISH COUNCILLOR

QUALIFICATIONS

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country? Yes/No

Are you 18 or over? Yes/No

(You only need one of the following four qualifications but please say Yes to all that apply)

Are you on the electoral register for the parish? Yes/No

Have you lived either in the parish, 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 for at least a year? Yes/No

Have you had your only or main place of work in the parish for at least a year? Yes/No

DISQUALIFICATIONS

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

WHAT YOU CAN BRING TO THE PARISH COUNCIL SKILLS AUDIT

Please tick/highlight the boxes below relevant to your knowledge

1 Specific to Parish Council

- Knowledge of {your Council's work} in general
- Knowledge of {your Council's work} specifically
- Knowledge of the local authority involved with {your Council's work}
- Knowledge of the local statutory agencies involved with {your Council's work}
- Knowledge of national policy concerning {your Council's work}

2 General to Parish Council

- Knowledge of the local area in general
- Knowledge of current good practice for charities
- Experience of other voluntary organisations (as committee)
- Experience of other voluntary organisations (as staff or volunteer)
- Campaigning
- Partnership Working
- Community Development

3 Management/Organisation

- General Management
- Financial Management
- Project Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Planning
- Policy Making

4 Professional

- Law
- Accounting
- IT
- HR Marketing/PR
- Training/Development
- Other please indicate:

5 Committee

- Chairing
- Consensus building
- Energy and Enthusiasm
- Strategic thinking
- Governance

Do you have anything you wish to contribute to the Parish Council not mentioned above either in terms of experience, knowledge or skills?

Please tell us your reasons for wishing to become a Parish Councillor?

Although you have no experience as a Parish Councillor what is your perception of the role of a Locking Parish Councillor?

When is your preferred time for attending meetings? Day / Evening / Either

(Under present legislation the Parish Council is not permitted to contribute to the cost of councillors' childcare or care of dependants.)

Are there any factors, other than exceptional circumstances, that might prevent you from regularly attending the Bi-monthly Parish Meetings?

Are there any local issues that you are particularly interested in that you believe could be of benefit to the community?

What are your hobbies/interests?

Lastly are there any questions you would like to ask us?

As a councillor representing your community you will help keep it a great place to live and work.

You will be supported in your role and will be expected to undertake training.

You should be comfortable working electronically.

You should have a positive outlook and a can-do attitude and be willing to work as part of a team.

Signed

Date/...../20.....

Please return to:

The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer, Locking Parish Council

Email: clerk@lockingparishcouncil.gov.uk

APPENDIX B - Eligibility to stand as a Parish Councillor

QUALIFICATIONS

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

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country?	
Are you 18 or over?	

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

Are you on the electoral register for this parish?	
Have you lived either in this parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in this parish for at least a year?	
Have you had your only or main place of work in this parish for at least a year?	

DISQUALIFICATIONS

You must be able to answer "No" to **all** of the questions below

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	
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?	
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	
You have been convicted for the failure to register or declare disclosable interest under the Localism Act 2011 (England)	
You are listed on the Sex Offender Register - Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022, section 81A of the Local Government Act 1972	

Your name.....

Signature.....

Date.....