

FELTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY

Introduction:

Following the loss of a parish councillor (due to resignation, death, disqualification or failure to attend meetings for six months), a Casual Vacancy must be advertised. The Parish Council is required to notify Broadland District Council of the casual vacancy and then advertise the vacancy to give electors the opportunity to request an election. If ten electors write to the District Council within fourteen working days requesting an election, then one is called. The Parish Clerk will advertise the process on notice boards, website and any other means in use by the council at the time. If an election is called the Parish Council will be required to pay the costs. If residents do not request a ballot within fourteen days of the vacancy notice being posted, the Parish Council is able to co-opt. In the event of the Parish Council being required to fill the vacancy by co-option, this process will be followed.

Eligibility of Candidates

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

- He/she is an elector for 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 ones 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;
- being disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices

Process:

1. the Clerk will advertise the vacancy within the Parish (on the noticeboard and on the Parish Council website and Facebook page)
2. interested persons should register their interest with the Clerk and provide a short brief outlining why they feel they are a suitable person for the role of Parish Councillor.
3. notice of the intention to co-opt to the vacancy will be included on the agenda of the next Parish Council.
4. at the relevant item on the Parish Council meeting agenda the Chairman will request those Councillors present to vote for the candidate(s) who have put themselves forward.

Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled. Voting will be by raised hands, or – if requested by more than half of councilors present - by submitting a signed vote on paper to the Clerk and will continue until one candidate has received an absolute majority of the votes cast. At that stage the successful candidate will be declared elected. Should no single candidate receive a majority on the first vote the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. In the event of a tie the Chair will have the casting vote. Voting will then take place on the remaining candidates and continues until one person receives an absolute majority (defined as more than half the votes cast). In the event of a tie the Chair has the casting vote. The successful candidate is then declared co-opted.

After Co-option

The co-opted member must sign an acceptance of office form. They can then take their place and join the meeting. A link to the register of interests form will also be forwarded. This must be returned to Broadland District Council, within three weeks. This document will be published on the District Council's website.

The Parish Clerk will, within five working days of the meeting, send the new Councillor a welcome email, comprising of the Register of Interests form and various policies including the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as well as a link to the website which contains additional policies. The dates of future meetings and available training will also be given.

By accepting office all new Councillors will be required to:

- Undertake training for new Councillors, as a minimum. However, it is encouraged that Councillors attend as many courses as possible, to ensure that Councillors have a thorough understanding of the functions and legislature of parish councils;
- Use a parish council email address which will be supplied by the parish clerk within three weeks of being co-opted. This email address will be published on FPCs website. Parish Council email addresses are to be used for all formal Council business and should not be used in any other way. Personal email addresses must not be used for Council business;
- Ensure they do not make reference to the Council or its services or represent themselves on behalf of the Council on social media without formal permission from the Council to do so.