



## Hordle Parish Council – Co-option Procedure

**Approved 20.2.24**

**Next Review: February 2025**

When a casual vacancy arises for a councillor in the Parish of Hordle the procedure is to:

1. Notify the Returning Officer at New Forest District Council (NFDC) of the vacancy.
2. Advertise the Vacancy on the Parish Council Noticeboards, website and may advertise in the local press.
3. An election to fill the vacancy shall be held if within 14 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays) after public notice of the vacancy has been given, notice in writing of a request for such an election has been given to the Returning Officer at NFDC by 10 persons who are registered as local government electors in the Parish. (Local Elections [Parishes and Communities] Rules 2006).
4. On receipt of the notification by the Returning Officer that an election has not been called, to place a notice on the Council's noticeboards, website and may place in the local press requesting that applications to fill the vacancy be returned to the Parish Office within 14 days.

Candidates will be requested to complete an application form with details stating their background and reasons for wishing to serve on the Council and that there is no impediment to their becoming a Councillor, as proscribed by law / statute (LGA 1972 s.79 (1), s.80 & s.81).

5. **Vacancy 6 months before the Parish Elections:** Where a vacancy occurs within six months before the day on which a Councillor would regularly have retired at the next four yearly election, Parish Councils *may* co-opt to fill the vacancy. During that final six-month period there will be no formal elections to fill any vacancies.
6. Candidates will be invited to attend the next Full Council meeting.
7. At the above Full Council meeting the candidates will be given 5 minutes to elaborate on their submissions and to allow Members to ask questions of them with public and press excluded.
8. Following interviews, the meeting to re-open to the public and press and voting to take place.
  - Only Councillors present at the meeting may vote upon a person to fill a vacancy.
  - Councillors have only one vote per vacancy each.
  - The Chair puts the names of the candidates into alphabetical order and voting shall be by means of a signed ballot.
  - A successful candidate must have received an absolute majority vote of those present and voting.

If there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies.

If two candidates poll the same number of votes a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair of the meeting has a second or casting vote.

If there is more than one vacancy, each Councillor will have one vote per seat i.e. two vacancies will enable two votes.

The same procedure as specified above is used to fill each separate vacancy.

9. The Chair then declares the successful candidates co-opted.
10. The co-option process must take place in an open council meeting. Candidates may wish to be present in the public gallery and there is no reason to prevent this.
11. Successful candidates will be summoned to attend the next full meeting of the Council, by which time they must have signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and read and understood the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council. The Declaration of Acceptance of Office is kept by the Clerk.
12. The Clerk will advise the Returning offices of the District Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.
13. The Clerk should ensure that all new Councillors have read and understood the Code of Local Government Conduct adopted by the Council and undertake the Induction Programme for new Councillors.
14. All new Councillors must, within 28 days of appointment to office, Register their Interests with the District Council Monitoring Officer. Usually forms are supplied by the Monitoring Officer to the Clerk.