



ALLER PARISH COUNCIL CO-OPTION POLICY

**Adopted at the Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council on
9th September 2024**

A policy setting out the procedure for co-opting to a casual vacancy following an election process

Introduction

If no request for an election is received by Somerset Council by the date on the Notice of Vacancy, the Democratic Services Department will advise the Parish Council that it may co-opt to the vacancy. Co-option is the process by which the Parish Council selects a new Councillor and it is undertaken as an agenda item within a monthly Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council manages the process of co-option by itself and strives to demonstrate that it is fair and equitable by following the procedure set out below:

Procedure

- 1 Aller Parish Council invite interested candidates to apply in writing to the Clerk using the Co-option Application Form. Applications will be circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting at which a Parish Councillor is to be co-opted. Only applications submitted using the prescribed form will be considered.
- 2 A date for receipt of applications will be set once confirmed that a vacancy may be filled by co-option. No applications will be considered before this date but the Parish Council may extend the deadline at its discretion.
- 3 Aller Parish Council is not obliged to fill any vacancy. Even if the Parish Council invites applications for co-option, it is not obliged to select any of the candidates who apply.
- 4 If a candidate is a relative of a Councillor or has connections with any candidate which may be perceived as prejudicial, that Councillor should declare an interest and withdraw from the meeting. Under any of these circumstances, a vote by the Councillor concerned is not allowed.
- 5 At the Parish Council meeting candidates are invited to say something about themselves and Councillors have the opportunity to ask questions of the candidates. Each candidate will be allocated a maximum of three minutes.
- 6 Once all candidates have spoken, the council's debate and vote on the co-option will be conducted in a public section of its meeting, considering the criteria as set out in Appendix A – Person Specification. It follows that the candidates, as members of the public, will be entitled to be present during the proceedings.

In accordance with standing order 10a(xi), the council may at any point in the debate propose to move to a closed session of its meeting where candidates for co-option and members of the public will be requested to withdraw from the meeting and will be invited back following conclusion of the debate.

- 7 To be appointed to the council any applicant must secure an absolute majority in a ballot at a full council meeting. If there is more than one candidate for the vacancy the process will be that the person with the least votes gets taken off the list and a fresh vote is taken until an overall majority is reached. In the event of a tie the Chairman shall have the casting vote. If a majority is not attained an appointment will not be made.
- 8 Voting will be by way of a show of hands
- 9 Councillors will have one vote per vacancy to be filled.
- 10 The successful candidate is declared co-opted to the Parish Council and will be asked to join the meeting.
- 11 Successfully co-opted applicants become Councillors in their own right with immediate effect, having signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and are no different from any other member. Their term of office runs until the next quadrennial elections for the Parish Council. They must fill in an entry to the Members' Register of Interests within 28 days with a copy passed on to the monitoring officer at Somerset Council.