



CO-OPTION POLICY

Scope and purpose

This policy aims to explain the procedure regarding co-option. The information is to be used by members of the council and members of the public. The aim of the policy is also to show that the process is fair, open and transparent. This policy details the process to be followed regarding co-option.

Background

Ordinary elections are held every four years, the next being 2027 and councillors are elected to serve a four-year term of office. A casual vacancy occurs when a parish councillor resigns, dies, ceases to be qualified, or becomes disqualified (full details at appendix A), at any time during the four-year period. The vacancy must be filled, either by election, or co-option, except during the last 6 months of the four-year period, when the council may co-opt.

Notice of the Casual Vacancy must be given

As soon as practicable a notice of casual vacancy should be put on noticeboards in the parish. Copies of the notice are supplied by North Norfolk District Council's Electoral Services Team ElectoralServices@north-norfolk.gov.uk

1. The notice allows ten electors of the parish to request that an election be held to fill the vacancy. There is no form of words for this request, which might simply be a letter headed with such words as "We the undersigned being electors for the Parish, call for an election to fill the vacancy arising from the [death] [resignation] of ..." It is helpful if the ten signatures are accompanied by printed names, addresses and electoral numbers from the current electoral register.
2. The request is sent to the Returning Officer of North Norfolk District Council and must be received within fourteen days computed in accordance with the election rules. The election must then be held within sixty days of the date of the notice of casual vacancy.
3. If no request is received, then, after the expiry of the fourteen-day period, the council shall co-opt a person to fill the vacancy as soon as is practicable.
4. In the case of a casual vacancy occurring in the last six months before the ordinary elections, the council is required to give a notice of the casual vacancy but an election is not held. The council may co-opt if it wishes, leaving any unfilled vacancies to be filled at the ordinary elections.

If an election is called, the Returning Officer will set a date for polling day, and the election process will begin with the publication of a notice of election, copies of which will be supplied to the clerk. That notice informs the electors where they may obtain nomination papers and the date by when they should be delivered. It gives the dates by which applications to vote by post or proxy must be made. It also gives the date of the poll in the event of a contest.



Co-option

The council may co-opt whoever it pleases to fill a casual vacancy. However, that person must be qualified to serve as a councillor (appendix A)

Applications

We aim to encourage applications from anyone in the parish who is eligible to stand. Councillors or parishioners can approach individuals to suggest that they might wish to consider putting their names forward for co-option. As a minimum, co-option vacancies will be advertised on the website and on the noticeboard. The advertisement for the co-option will include:

- The method by which applications can be made, this will be in writing to the Clerk
- The closing date for applications
- Contact point for potential candidates to obtain more information – the Clerk or standing Councillors
- Advice that further information is available electronically via the website - a form to complete which includes a maximum of 100 words asking the candidate why they would like to be a councillor; name; address and other contact details.

Applicants should request an application from the clerk and return the completed form via email or post, to be circulated to the Parish Council prior to co-option. If an alternative format is needed for completion, please contact the Clerk and request this.

When applications are received, the Clerk will confirm eligibility. Any candidate found to be offering inducements will be disqualified.

The Council will appoint an interview panel of 2 Councillors who will carry out an information session with each candidate to allow the candidate to ask any questions and to inform them of what the role involves. Anyone joining the Parish Council should be aware of the amount of time and commitment needed for the role. Ideally all applicants should have email access and be willing to attend additional meetings to the monthly Council meeting.

Attendance at a Council meeting, following an application

All candidates will be sent a copy of the agenda and agenda papers.

Voting to Co-opt a Councillor

In the event of a candidate being unable to attend, their application will still be considered by Council members. In the event of a candidate being related to a councillor, then the councillor would be expected to declare an interest and request a dispensation to speak and vote.

The usual rules on voting apply. The decision must be made by a majority of members who are present and voting. Where there are more than two candidates for the vacancy, it may be necessary to run a series of votes, each time removing the candidate who has the least number of votes until one candidate secures an absolute majority. If there is more than one vacancy then each vacancy must be filled by a separate vote or series of votes. The person presiding over the meeting may vote, and if there is an equality of votes they may exercise their casting vote.



The council's debate and vote on the co-option must be conducted in the public section of its meeting. It follows that the candidates, as members of the public, will be entitled to be present during the proceedings.

Starting as a Councillor

The successful candidate(s) are asked to start as a councillor immediately after completing their declarations of acceptance of office. The new member should have received an agenda however the fact that they have not received a summons does not make their attendance as a councillor illegal. (Local Government Act 1972 Sch 12, para 10(3)). Where appropriate they will also be appointed to any council committee. If an absent candidate is successful, members must agree to the signing the declaration of acceptance of office before or at the very start of the next meeting. New councillors will also be made aware of the fact that Declaration of Interests Forms will need to be completed within 28 days of co-option.

Adopted July 2026

For review in July 2028



Appendix A

A person qualifies to take office as Councillor if:

- Must be a qualifying British or Commonwealth citizen. You may also be eligible as a citizen of the European Union, however the criteria has changed now that the UK has left the European Union. Please check on the gov.uk website for advice about EU citizens' voting and candidacy rights.
- Must be at least 18 years of age.
- On the day of taking office and thereafter, continues to be a local government elector for the area of the authority.
- Has during the whole 12 month period preceding the relevant day*, occupied, as owner or tenant, any land or other premises in that area and/or;
- Has a principal or only place of work during the preceding 12 months of the relevant date*, in the area and/or:
- Has during the whole 12 months of the relevant date*, resided at an address in the area or:
- Has during the whole 12 months preceding the relevant date* resided within three miles of the parish or community. (Local Government Act 1972 s.79(1))

A person is disqualified from taking office as a Councillor if:

- Undertakes any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented.
- Any person who is subject to a bankruptcy restriction or order or an interim bankruptcy restriction or a debt relief restriction order or interim debt relief restriction order under Schedule 4ZB of the Insolvency Act 1986
- Has within five years before the day of election, or since his/her election, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine
- Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the Representations of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices (Local Government Act 1972 s. 80)
- A person who is disqualified from being elected or holding office as a member of a local council is also disqualified for being a member of a committee of sub-committee of that council or for being a representative of the council on a joint committee involving that council (s104).
- A person how has been convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices.

* Relevant date means the day on which the person is nominated as a candidate and if there is poll, the date of election.



Application for Co-option of a Parish Councillor

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Parish Councillor. Please complete this application form to assist the Council in making their decision as to whether to co-opt a candidate.

Full Name and Title	
Home Address	
Contact Telephone	
Email address	

Personal Statement:

Please provide the Council with some background information about yourself and any skills and experience you feel might be relevant.

--

**Reasons for Applying:**

Please provide the Council with reasons for wanting to become a Parish Councillor

Signature:

Your application also requires signatures of two registered electors (known as proposer and seconder) from the parish area:

	Proposer	Secunder
Name		
Address		
Signature		

Please return your completed application to the Clerk of the Parish Council. Your application will be considered at the next Parish Council meeting, where a vote will be held to decide your co-option to Sloley Parish Council.

Data Protection Act (2018): The information provided on the application form will remain private and confidential.



- 1. In order to be eligible for co-option as a Parish Councillor, you must be a British Subject, or a citizen of the commonwealth; and on the date of the poll or election, 18 years of age or over; and be able to meet one of the following qualifications set out below:**

*Please tick which one applies to you:

- a. I am registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
- b. I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the parish; or
- c. My principle or only place of work during those twelve months have been in the parish; or
- d. I've during the whole of the twelve months resided in the parish or within three miles of it.

- 2. Please note that under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972, a person is disqualified from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of Local Council if he/she:**

- a. Holds any paid office or employment of the local council (other than the office of Chairman) or of a joint committee on which the Council is represented; or
- b. Is a person who has been adjudged bankrupt or has made a composition or arrangement with his/her creditors (but see below); or
- c. Has within five years before the day of election, or since his/her election, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man of any offence and has been sentenced to imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- d. Is otherwise disqualified under Part III of the representation of the People Act 1983 for corrupt or illegal practices.

This disqualification for bankruptcy ceases in the following circumstances:

- i. If the bankruptcy is annulled on the grounds that either the person ought not to have been adjudged bankrupt or that his/her debts have been fully discharged;
- ii. If the person is discharged with a certificate that the bankruptcy was caused by misfortune without misconduct on his/her part;
- iii. If the person is discharged without such a certificate

In i and ii above, the disqualification ceases on the date of the annulment and discharge respectively. In iii, it ceases on the expiry of five years from the date of discharge

Declaration

Ihereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Sloley Parish Councillor; and the information given on this form is a true and accurate report.

Signature:

Date:



Co-opted Councillor Person Specification

Competency	Essential	Desirable
Personal Attributes	• Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community • Forward thinking	• Can bring a new skill, expertise or key local knowledge to the Council
Experience, skills, knowledge and ability	• Ability to listen constructively • A good team player • Ability to pick up and run with a variety of projects and a solid interest in local matters • Ability and willingness to represent the Council and their community • Good interpersonal skills and able to contribute opinions at meetings whilst willing to see other views and accept majority decisions • Ability to communicate succinctly and clearly • Ability and willingness to work closely with other members and maintain good working relationships with all members and staff • Ability and willingness to work with the Council's partners (e.g. voluntary groups, other Parish Councils, principle authority, charities) • Ability and willingness to undertake induction training and other relevant training.	• Experience of working or being a member in a local authority or other public body • Experience of working with voluntary and or local community/interest groups • Basic knowledge of legal issues relating to town and parish Councils or local authorities • Experience of delivering presentations
Circumstances	• Ability and willingness to attend meetings of the Council (or meetings of other local authorities and local bodies) at any time and events in the evening and at weekends.	