



CASUAL VACANCY AND CO-OPTION POLICY

Reviewed 17.09.24

Introduction

When a casual vacancy arises for a Councillor to the parish of Odiham and North Warnborough, more than six months from the date of the next normal elections, the procedure is to:

1. Notify Hart District Council Electoral Services about the vacancy.
2. Advertise the vacancy on the Council's notice board, website and Facebook page. Applicants should, in the first instance, apply in writing to Hart DC at the address published on vacancy notice.
3. An election to fill the vacancy shall be held if within fourteen days (calculated as per Section 4 of the Act) 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 Hart DC by ten persons who are registered as local government electors in the parish (Local Elections [Parishes and Communities] Rules 2006). Hart District Council will notify the Parish Council of the closing date and responses.
4. On receipt of notification by the Returning Officer that an election has not been called, OPC will place a Casual Vacancy notice on the Council's notice boards, website and Facebook page requesting applications to fill the vacancy be returned to the Parish Office within 14 days of the publication, or by a specified date to fit in with the date of the next full Council meeting.
5. Applicants should apply in writing to clerk@odhamparishcouncil.gov.uk confirming that they meet the eligible criteria (as set out in the Local Government Act 1972, section 79*) and providing a summary of the reasons why they have applied and any skills and experience they consider relevant.*A candidate must be:
 - A British subject or a citizen of the a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
 - At least 18 years of age
 - A local government elector for the area of the authority, or for during the preceding 12 months, lived in the parish or within 3 miles of the parish, have owned or occupied land in the parish, or worked in the parishA candidate cannot:
 - Hold paid office or employment within the council
 - Be subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
 - Have been within the last five years convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment for more than three months
6. Following receipt of completed applications, candidates will be invited to attend the next Full Council meeting. The meeting agenda will state that a co-option is being considered and the number of applicants but personal information will be withheld from publication to the public.
7. All applicants will be invited to speak at the meeting for a maximum of three minutes to elaborate on their application and Councillors may ask questions.
8. Where the number of applicants is equal or less than the number of available positions, then one resolution shall be taken to co-opt those applicants. The vote requires a proposer and seconder and required an absolute majority.
9. Where the number of applicants exceeds the number of available positions, the Chair may propose a closed session to allow councillors to discuss the applications.
10. When there are more applicants than vacancies, OPC will attempt to fill a vacancy by:
 - a. Favouring applicants which will fairly and reasonably represent the parish geographically and demographically.
 - b. Selecting skills and experience which will complement and enhance those of current Members.
11. Once the meeting has been re-opened, voting will take place. Voting by means of a signed ballot may take place if requested and seconded by Councillors. If there are more candidates than vacancies, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be excluded.

If two candidates poll the same number of votes a separate vote to eliminate one of them will be held. Voting will continue with the lowest polling candidate being excluded until the number of candidates matches the number of vacancies.

12. This business to conclude by the Chairman of the meeting announcing the names of the successful candidate/s.
13. The Clerk will advise the Returning Officer of the District Council of the names of anyone co-opted to the Council.
14. Before the successful candidate can participate in Council business s/he must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and deliver it to the Clerk.
15. All new councillors must, within 28 days of appointment to office, Register their Interests with the District Council Monitoring Officer.

Vacancy six months BEFORE 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 and will make this decision by resolution at a full Council meeting. During that final six month period there will be no formal election to fill any vacancies.