



# DOGMERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

**Ref:** 64/20  
**Title:** Councillor Recruitment Policy  
**Adopted:** 27 May 2020  
**Review:** July 2022

## **Background**

Dogmersfield Parish Council (DPC) may have a maximum of five Parish Councillors. Their period of office runs until the date of the next council (ordinary) elections. Should a vacancy arise s.87(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the 1972 Act") requires a local council to give public notice of the vacancy.

## **Casual Vacancies arising more than 6 months before an ordinary election**

A casual vacancy can arise from a number of reasons including the resignation/death of a member. The Clerk will report the vacancy to the Hart District Council (HDC) Elections Officer and make Council aware. The HDC Elections Officer will provide advice regarding advertising the vacancy. As a minimum the vacancy will be advertised on the DPC website and the parish noticeboards.

If following the advertisement 10 electors request an election this will be organised by the Elections Officer at HDC. If 10 electors do not come forward to request an election, then after the end of the statutory 14-day period, DPC must co-opt to fill the vacancy as soon as is reasonably practicable to do so. The Clerk will advise Council that they will take the appropriate steps to advertise the vacancy by co-option. A member co-opted in these circumstances will serve until the date of the next ordinary parish election.

## **Casual Vacancies arising within 6 months before an ordinary election**

For casual vacancies arising within 6 months of an ordinary election co-option is the only available option. The Clerk will inform the HDC Elections Officer advising that a vacancy has arisen and enclose a copy of the proposed Notice of Vacancy. The Elections Officer will be asked to confirm that it is in order for the Council to consider filling the vacancy by co-option. Once the Vacancy has been advised the Clerk will advertise the vacancy. A member co-opted in these circumstances will serve until the date of the next ordinary parish election.

## **Co-option**

The vacancy and process for co-option will be advertised as widely as possible; as a minimum on the DPC website and the parish noticeboards for a minimum of 21 days, this requirement only being circumvented following a formal vote in council. The Council will make best endeavours to deliver a leaflet regarding the vacancy to every household within the Parish. The public notice will invite applications from candidates who satisfy:

- The eligibility criteria for being a councillor
- The competencies / skills (listed in a person specification), agreed by the council.

The advertisement will give a formal closing date. Candidates will be advised to download more information from the Parish Council's website or request it from the Clerk.

Applications will be returned to the Clerk. If Council members know someone that is interested in being co-opted onto the Council, they should tell the person to contact the Clerk expressing an interest. There must be no canvassing by members on behalf of individual candidates.



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## Eligibility to be a Councillor

Candidates must at the date of election / co-option

- be at least 18 years old
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the European Union

AND

- meet at least one of the following four qualifications:

Be, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the parish/community in which they wish to stand from the day of their nomination onwards.

OR

Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish/community area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of their nomination and the day of election.

OR

Their main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of their nomination and the day of election has been in the parish/community area.

OR

They have lived in the parish/community area or within three miles of it during the whole of the 12 months before the day of their nomination and the day of election.

Candidates are disqualified from eligibility if

- They are employed by the parish or hold a paid office under the parish council.
- They are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- They have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.
- They have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices).

Applicants must provide a written self-certification that they meet the eligibility criteria.

## Selection Criteria and Person Specification

Council will set out in advance the criteria by which they intend to select their new councillor, (this may include a formal person specification) but at the very least should be based on some information about the skills and experience they are seeking. It is important when advertising to include some general information about the role and the commitment required\*. A list of essential and desirable qualities may be used however this may discourage otherwise enthusiastic and capable people from applying. The majority of Parish Councillors learn on the job and for DPC an ongoing interest in the village / parish and a willingness to commit to getting things done is of most value.

The skills and knowledge that may be helpful include:

- ✓ Previous community experience, voluntary work
- ✓ Experience of Finance, HR or Publicity and Communication etc.
- ✓ Good interpersonal skills
- ✓ Willingness to work with others
- ✓ Ability to attend evening meetings
- ✓ Flexibility and enthusiasm



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\* NALC has a useful publication about the role which should be made available for download by those considering applying for co-option - The Good Councillor Guide 2018.

## **The Selection Process**

Following the closing date, the Clerk will confirm the eligibility of all applicants. Their written self-certifications will be 'taken as read' unless the Clerk has reason to believe that the information given may be untrue. The Council must demonstrate that it has fairly considered all applicants. The Clerk will circulate the application/s to Council with the Agenda for the next Council meeting and arrange for the applicant/s to attend the meeting at which the co-option will be an agenda item.

The eligible applicants will be asked to submit an 'election statement' of not more than 250 words which will be circulated to councillors in advance of the meeting. At the meeting the applicants will in turn be asked to speak to Council (for a maximum of 3 minutes), about why they wish to be a Parish Councillor and what they will bring to the role. Councillors will then have the opportunity to question them. If an applicant is unable to attend the meeting the Clerk will read out their 'election statement'.

Guided by the Chairman Council will then discuss the applications and if required move to a vote by show of hands. When filling a vacancy by co-option, a successful candidate must receive a majority of those present and voting at the meeting. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the candidate with the least number of votes will be taken off the list of candidates and the vote taken again. This procedure will be repeated until a majority is obtained for a particular candidate. If there is more than one vacancy and the number of candidates equals the number of vacancies, all the vacancies may be filled by a single resolution of the Council.

If the successful candidate is present, they will be invited to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and will take up their role 4 days from the date of the meeting. A successful applicant who is absent must sign the Declaration of Office either before, or at, the next meeting, but no later.

NB. If the Chairman presiding feels it prudent to do so he may ask the candidate/s to step outside for the voting process. If there is only one candidate then the Council must have good reason not to co-opt them, however, there is no requirement for the Council to co-opt that person if they do not feel that they meet the selection criteria.

## **Welcoming a new councillor**

The Clerk will write to the Monitoring Officer and Elections Officer at HDC advising them of the successful candidate. The successful candidate will be given access to copies of the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Budget, Policies, a copy of the Good Councillor's Guide and useful information such as a list of all the members' names, addresses and telephone numbers. The Clerk will arrange for the new councillor to be given a Council e-mail address and will advise the Councillor of training courses available.